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Wedding Album from Hera

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Wedding Album from Hera

by ImmortalSimulacrum

Summary

Percy and Jason wake up in bed together in Vegas with no memories of the night before, rings on their fingers and a marriage certificate on their nightstand. One things for sure: Their girlfriends are going to be pissed.

The only thing they have that chronicles their Vegas adventure is a magical Wedding Album from Hera herself. What stories will it tell?

Notes

Am I writing this instead of working on my Tangled jercy AU? Yes, yes I am.

See the end of the work for more notes

Why Is Grover Bald

Percy woke up slowly, blinking his eyes against the sharp light from the sun streaking in through the window. Annabeth's warm naked body was curled against him, her blonde hair just barely peeking out from under the fluffy duvet she had her head buried in.

He squinted at the alarm clock on the bedside table. It read 10:45.

Percy tried to sit up and then immediately regretted it. His whole body protested the action, his muscles sore and it felt like he'd fallen on his ass on the pavement. His head started up an intense throbbing. He groaned and forced himself into a sitting position, his back propped against the headboard of the bed. Annabeth shuffled some in her sleep and threw an arm around his waist under the blanket. He slipped a hand under it and smoothed down the strong (damn Wise Girl, have you been working out recently?) planes of her back while he looked around.

He was alarmed to discover he had no idea where he was. Hot panic seized in his stomach before he took a deep breath and forced himself to calm down. He still remembered *who* he was, and he still remembered everything else about his life, so this wasn't like the Hera debacle from the Giant War. Another sharp pain shot through his brain and he finally took notice of the sour taste in his mouth. He smacked his lips, categorizing the dishevelled state of the...hotel room, by the looks of it. Clothes were strewn about the furniture, a lamp was knocked over, the lone coffee table was pushed up against the wall, and there was a...pineapple on it. The pineapple had two lacey strips of cloth crisscrossed around it. His unhelpful brain supplied him with an image of the rings on an atom.

He smacked his lips again, trying to figure out why his mouth tasted like death. Was he hungover? It would explain why his head was pounding and the bad taste in his mouth. It would also explain the memory loss.

Annabeth shifted again, her warm skin sliding against his. Oh, he was naked too. Had they had sex last night? His sore body and legs said yes. Very vigorous sex by the feel of it and the thrashed state of the random hotel room.

But had they done it while drunk? That wasn't like either of them. Percy frowned. He didn't like to drink, in fact he avoided it at all costs. Annabeth liked to every once in a while but as a rule set by Percy himself he refused to have sex with her while she was drunk. For the life of him he couldn't remember deciding to drink last night. In fact he didn't remember *anything* from last night.

They definitely weren't in either of their college dorms in New Rome, and besides school was out for the summer anyway. This room certainly wasn't the Poseidon Cabin at Camp Half-Blood. The most logical solution he could come up with is they went out on the town for a date night and he had decided to have a rare drink. The drink must have turned into a few too many and he must have been too intoxicated to drive them back. Annabeth, logically, would have suggested they get a hotel room instead. Why they didn't just catch a cab was beyond him, it was bound to be cheaper than this nice looking hotel. Although...they might have been too horny to wait to get back to camp and found the nearest hotel and ravished each other the second they got in the door. Judging by the shirt tossed on the hat rack, he guessed that's what happened. He hoped he hadn't been the only one drunk last night.

Damn, he wished he remembered last night. The sex had probably been amazing, which was rare for them. Not the sex, they had plenty of that, but the amazing part. They don't have a *bad* sex life, it's just that Annabeth likes to do things quickly and efficiently like she does everything else. It's usually a planned event because of the absolute truck load of work she juggles for college. Percy gets it, he does. His own Marine Biology major gives him plenty to do, but he always feels like maybe having scheduled sex sessions kinda takes the magic out of it. Not that he's complaining that he gets to have sex on a regular basis. He just wished she'd be more open to spontaneity. He doesn't

mean to sound like an asshole about this, he knows sex isn't everything. Percy stroked his hand across her muscled back again (seriously *had* she been hitting the gym lately?) and smiled. He loved this woman curled around him. He would do anything for her. She hummed, her voice deep with sleep, her head rubbing against the pillow under the blanket as she got comfortable, the very ends of her hair still sticking out.

His headache pulsed and reminded him that eventually he'd have to get up and find some Advil or he was going to be sorry for the rest of the day. His eyes scanned the unfamiliar room, hoping that by some miracle drunk him had left a glass of water and some painkillers for hungover him but no such luck.

His gaze snagged on an overflowing gift basket set on the floor next to the misplaced coffee table. The outer wrapping was torn open and inside there were random things like chocolates, bath soaps, and a box of condoms. Unopened. Uh oh. Percy really *really* hoped they hadn't been that stupid last night. No, they must have brought their own, they would never be that careless.

He was just contemplating waking up Annabeth when the lock to their door clicked. He went to reach for his sword reflexively but his pants were currently draped over the T.V.. Turns out he didn't need Riptide.

Grover, Leo, Frank, Nico, and Will burst in through the door and rushed into the room, pushing and shoving each other to try to get in first. Percy honestly didn't know how to react to his friends barging into his and his girlfriends random hotel room with no warning. He settled for making sure they were both decently covered. Annabeth was completely buried beneath the enormous blanket, and his lap was at least covered so all was good there.

He turned his glare on his friends, "Can I help yo-"

“Oh, thank the *gods* you two are alright!” Grover was wringing his hands together, eyeing Percy worriedly. “The receptionist said they upgraded your room last night, but we didn’t know until this morning when we found your old room empty.”

Percy’s mouth popped open. “Uh, Grover your...your hair...it’s…” Grover didn’t *have* hair. His head was completely bald, his goat horns standing up proudy from his hairline.

“Huh?” Grover patted his cue ball absently, “Oh, that. That doesn’t matter right now. What does matter is...are you two okay?” He asked it gently, like he was breaking some bad news to him.

Percy’s face scrunched up in confusion, “Okay? Yeah we’re fine. At least we were until you guys barged in and started yelling.” He put a hand to the side of his head to try and calm the throbbing. “What are you even doing here anyway?”

Leo gaped his mouth like a suffocating fish, “W-what…”

“Percy…” He looked at Nico who had just spoken up. “Do you...remember anything from last night?” He quirked his eyebrow which called attention to the fact that it appeared to be freshly pierced. This day just kept getting weirder.

“Nico your eyebrow…”

“I’m gonna take that as a no, Nico.” Will said.

“Did you get a new piercing too, Will?” Will grimaced and rubbed his chest, mumbling something that sounded suspiciously like ‘nipples’.

Frank slowly closed his eyes and groaned, his hands coming up to scrub his face. “They’re gonna kill us,” He told the ceiling.

“Woah, hang on a minute, what did you guys do? Why are we going to kill you? And what the fuck happened to your *arm* , Frank?”

Frank twisted his left arm this way and that way. It was wrapped from wrist to shoulder in a bright pink medical wrap, the kind that sticks to itself. He winced, “I don’t know, I’m too scared to look. But it hurts.”

Grover snapped his fingers, “Percy, more important things, okay? You really don’t know what happened last night?”

Percy wracked his brain, trying his hardest to recall anything. “No, I got nothing. Also, what the hell are you guys doing here? Where *is* here? Do *you* know what happened last night? Did...did I get drunk?”

Leo nodded nervously, “Percy you got *married* last night. We’re in Las Vegas, dude.”

Percy felt his eyes widen comically, “W-what!? Annabeth and I got married last night and I don’t even remember it!” She was going to kill him. They weren’t even engaged, but they went eloped in Vegas? Forget Annabeth killing him, his mom was going to *murder* him.

All of a sudden the group couldn’t meet his eye. They fidgeted, elbowing each other like they were silently trying to get someone else to spill the beans.

“Someone tell me what’s going on!” Annabeth stirred at his loud shout, groaning. He soothed his hand down her back again.

Frank stepped forward, twiddling his thumbs. In a voice just above a whisper he said, “Percy, you didn’t marry Annabeth.” What? What did that mean?

She seemed to have finally woken up from all the yelling. Her head lifted off the pillow and the blanket slid down to her naked shoulders as she peered up at him. Her electric blue eyes blinking sle-

Electric blue? Annabeth’s eyes were grey. *You didn’t marry Annabeth* .

Jason’s face stared up at him in growing horror. Percy wasn’t sure who screamed first, but he does know that they jumped apart at the same time. Luckily for Jason he had been on Percy’s side of the queen sized bed, unfortunately for Percy he had been sitting close to the edge. Jason scuttled backwards, careful to keep under the blanket. Percy leaned too far over and started to fall off the mattress, but Jason’s hand shot out and caught one of his, pulling him back to the middle of the bed. Which counteracted their attempts to get away from each other but it was better than landing on the floor naked in front of his friends. The sharp movement made him grunt in pain as his sore body was jerked around. Their hands clinked together when Jason had grabbed him. Once they were both out of danger of falling, Percy took his hand back and stared at the ring on his finger.

Jason spoke for the first time sounding panicked, “Oh my gods, oh my gods *oh my gods* . What happened? Percy, why are we…” Jason’s eyes flitted over the exposed part of Percy’s body, “Naked?”

Percy was still concentrating on the ring. It looked like a normal wedding band, except it was duller than gold. He felt it with shaky fingers. It was Celestial Bronze. He tried tugging it off but it was stuck

fast to his finger. Finally he looked at Jason, who seemed to be going through the seven stages of grief. If Percy had to guess, he'd say he was at the bargaining stage. "Jason, I can't-I can't get it off."

Jason raised his hand, a matching ring adorning his finger. He tried to take it off as well but it was apparently as firmly attached as Percy's. "Percy, what is this? What are these?" His voice raised an octave, coming out high and reedy.

Percy tugged at his hair, "I don't *know* ," He whined, "I don't remember anything."

Jason's chest rose and fell rapidly, "We di-didn't have…" He trailed off, his face flushing crimson, "Did we?" He squeaked out.

The others watched them silently. Half of them had their hands over their mouths.

Holy Hera, did they? No. No, no, no, no, no.

Percy closed his eyes, unable to meet Jason's wide questioning ones. His sore body was proof enough that they had. "Fuck." He muttered, opening his eyes again. By the look on Jason's face he knew he'd puzzled out the truth. They'd cheated on their girlfriends with each other.

"Ohhhhhhhhh…" Everyone looked at Leo, one of his hands covering his mouth, the other resting on his hip.

From beside him Jason grunted. "Why is Grover bald?"

“I know as much as you do,” Percy said.

“You guys *fucked* ?” Leo shouted. Both Percy and Jason winced at the loud noise.

“I don’t *know,* ” Jason sounded frustrated. “Percy?”

Percy nearly sobbed, half wanting to lie but knowing he shouldn’t. “Yes.”

Will gave a sharp inhale. “This is bad, this is really bad.”

Jason threw his hand down on the bed, “Oh, you think, Will? I just cheated on my *girlfriend* with *Percy!* I don’t even remember it! I don’t even drink!”

Nico took a step forward, “You drank plenty last night. Both of you did. And we have bigger problems than that, right now.”

“Bigger than the fact that we’re going to lose our lives and probably our balls when the girls find out?” Percy said *when* not *if* , because the best thing to do in this situation was fess up as soon as they got home. He was smart enough to know that.

Grover cleared his throat and nodded at Percy’s bedside table. Percy followed his line of sight to it. On top was the alarm clock he’d seen earlier, but there were also two other items he hadn’t noticed until now. At first he thought Grover was trying to point out the half empty bottle of lube, but then he saw the paper underneath it. He picked

them both up gingerly.

The paper was thick, cardstock almost. There were actually two of them, stacked on top of each other. They radiated a quiet power, which immediately set him on edge. The bottle of lube was...well a bottle of lube. He dropped it on the blanket between them. Jason swatted it off the bed quickly, it flew across the room and bounced off the wall, landing in the garbage can. He was pretty sure he used the winds to make it land there.

“Dude.” Percy gave him a look.

“Sorry, I panicked.”

Percy heard Leo mumble ‘nice shot’. He rolled his eyes and set the papers down between them where the lube had previously been. Their friends crowded around the bed to get a better view.

The top page was a certificate of marriage with their names on it. At the bottom were a few lines for their signatures and the signatures of two witnesses and two family members. Jason’s signature was written too far down so it ran through the line it was supposed to sit on and there was a little smiley face drawn after his last name. He’d clearly been past drunk when he’d done it. Percy’s wasn’t much better. Somehow he’d managed to write it backwards. Percy’s witness line was signed by some dude named Bloody Axel, whoever the fuck that was. Jason’s was signed by Leo.

Jason’s head snapped up, “Dude, what the fuck?! Why did you sign this!”

Leo put his hands up, “Hey, you two can be very persuasive when you’re drunk. You begged me to, alright.”

“Who’s Bloody Axel?” Percy wondered.

“I-” Leo’s face scrunched up like he was thinking, “I don’t remember. We all kinda have memory gaps from last night. We only knew you guys got married because the front desk clerk told us to wish you a happy marriage when we went to ask them where you’d gone.”

“Percy.” Jason’s voice got his attention. He was pointing at his family signature line. It read *Thalia Grace* , in Thalia’s very distinctive scratchy writing. “My sister was there.”

Percy did a quick glance at his family line and saw it was signed by Frank. “Frank...really…” Frank had the good grace to look ashamed as he shrugged. Percy sighed. “Whatever. So where’s Thalia if she was there last night?”

The others looked at each other before they all shrugged. “We don’t-” Will started.

“Remember. Yeah that seems to be the motto this morning. Is there anything we *do* remember?”

Grover raised his hand slowly. Percy couldn’t help but stare at his bald head. “Uh, the bigger problem we mentioned.” Grover reached over and moved the marriage certificate off the paper underneath it. Jason picked it up.

This one was emitting more power than the other one had. The top of it read: *Application for Marriage From the Office of Hera/Juno, Queen of the Gods, in Partnership and Endorsed by Aphrodite, Goddess of Love.* Jason dropped it like it had burned him.

“What is this?” Jason asked, swallowing audibly. Anger bubbled in Percy’s chest. Hera was still trying to fuck up their lives, but this time she’d gone too far.

“It’s your marriage contract, idiots. You insisted on having it ‘official’,” Nico air quoted with his fingers, “I actually have that memory. You IM’d Hera and asked for an Olympus binding marriage union. She was pissed by the way, you IM’d her while she was in the bath.”

“Olympus binding…what…?” Jason asked.

Will gestured with his hand, “It’ll be better if you read it.”

They did. It was mostly formal application stuff; name, age, birthday, ect. At the very bottom was a paragraph outlining the conditions of an Olympus official marriage. The paragraph read: *All marriages approved and officiated by Queen Hera/Juno are officially recognized by all celestial corporations and organizations. In the event that you wish to dissolve your marriage, please send a copy of your Divorce Request through the Hermes delivery service. Your request will be processed in five to ten business days. Congratulations on your new marriage!*

Percy and Jason breathed a sigh of relief. All they had to do was request a divorce. It sounded easy enough. Will cleared his throat and turned the paper around, revealing the back side of it and the warning claus that said: WARNING: IF YOU WISH TO DISSOLVE YOUR MARRIAGE BUT HAVE ALREADY CONSUMMATED YOUR NEW UNION, PLEASE NOTE THAT DIVORCE IS NO LONGER AN OPTION. ALL CONSUMMATED MARRIAGES ARE FULLY LEGALLY BINDING, AND ANY DIVORCE REQUESTS RECEIVED FROM A COMPLETE UNION WILL BE DISCARDED. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ARE HAPPY WITH YOUR PARTNER BEFORE SOLIDIFYING YOUR MARRIAGE.

Percy made a choked sound. They were stuck in this marriage because they'd both been stupid and got too drunk last night. Neither of them even liked to drink. Why was this happening to them? Why does this always happen to *them?*

"M-maybe if we burn the pages it'll nullify it?" Jason said hopefully, looking at Leo expectantly.

The page on the bed glowed a bright gold before dimming. Words scrawled across the back of it under the warning label: *All applications and certificates from Hera/Juno's Office of Marriage Union are fireproof and the destruction of either forms will not dissolve your marriage.*

Jason put his head in his hands silently. Percy stared at the pineapple. The others were quiet, letting them absorb this information. He realized the lacey bands on the pineapple were wedding garters, like the kind brides wear under their dresses. One was blue, one was green. He almost prayed to Zeus to strike him down right then. Oh fuck. What would their dads think of what they'd done? They might already know.

The sound of the toilet flushing in their ensuite bathroom startled everyone. The door opened and a huge man stepped out. He had to have been over six feet tall, easy, and his hair was a vivid red color, including his bushy beard. His enormous muscles strained against the ties on the arms of his patched leather jacket. The man's legs were clad in black leather chaps pulled over a pair of jeans, which were tucked into thick leather boots. His nose looked like it had been freshly broken. All in all he looked like a member of a rough and tough biker gang. He stretched and yawned wide, bringing his hands down to straighten his jacket.

"Bloody Axel?" Percy guessed.

Bloody Axel turned and spread his arms wide. “The one and only. Man, I was worried I wasn’t gonna survive last night. You kids sure know how to party!” He scratched his head, his thick braided hair bouncing. “Percy, Jason, thank you for letting me crash in the bathroom. If I had gone home to my wife as drunk as I was last night, well…” He whistled, “Let’s just say it wouldn’t have been pretty.”

“Uh, no problem,” Percy said weakly. Where had they found this guy?

Bloody Axel cracked his knuckles and Percy saw Grover flinch. “Well, I’d better be off. Gotta get home and make sure the missus is alright.” He strutted over to the bed and picked up Percy’s arm. He was too shocked to protest. Bloody Axel pulled a Sharpie from one of his pockets and scrawled a phone number on the back of Percy’s hand. “For if you ever want to party again. Call me up, I’m always down for a good turf war or two.” Turf war? What the fuck was this guy talking about. Bloody Axel capped his Sharpie and slipped it back in his pocket. “If you’re ever near Vegas and need help, the Desert Riders will have your backs.”He pounded a fist against his chest. “Congratulations on your wedding, kids, may it be long and happy!” Bloody Axel threw his hands up in celebration. “I’m honored to have been a witness to the wedding-hey where’d that pineapple come from?”

“I don’t...remember.”

Axel waved his hand in a dismissive gesture, “You crazy dudes, what the fuck did you get up to after we got separated last night? Eh, nothing good, I’m sure.” He bent over and picked up a helmet that had been partially under the bed. He stuffed it on his head and turned for the door. The others parted like the red sea for him. Right before he left he looked over his shoulder. “Almost forgot to ask, how are those tattoos doing?” He pointed to Jason’s side.

A large white gauze covering was taped over the side of his ribs.

“T-tattoo?” Jason asked, hand coming up to hover over the bandage.

Grover gasped, “Percy, you have one too.”

“ *What?”* He croaked, hand flying to his side. Sure enough there was a bandage the exact same size and in the exact same place as Jason’s. He looked at Jason with scared eyes. “Did we get matching tattoos, bro?”

Jason didn’t say anything, just tore the tape off from around his bandage and peeled off the gauze. Underneath, blazed across the side of his ribcage, was a tattoo of a trident crossed with a lightning bolt. The design was simple but the implication was huge. Heart racing, Percy ripped his bandage off to reveal a matching one.

“Looking good. You two sat like champs through that whole session! I was proud to have the Rider’s tattoo artist do them for you, call it a little wedding present from me.” Bloody Axel grinned at them before addressing Frank. “You should probably leave the wrap on yours for another four hours at least, Zhang. It’s gonna need it.” With that he nodded, saluted to them, and then walked out the door.

Nico tried to hide his snickering but he didn’t try very hard. Jason glared at him. “You two are so *cheesy* . A trident and a lightning bolt? *Come on.* ”

Percy’s head thunked against the headboard as he stared up at the ceiling. He hurt everywhere. His side, his abs, his legs, his head, his lip which he was pretty sure was split, and even his *ass* hurt. Although the reason for that was sitting right next to him, his fists clenched in the sheets while Nico made fun of their matching tattoos.

Percy still didn’t know where the pineapple had come from.

The Wine

“Give them a break, Nico, they just got married.” Will chidded him.

“Fine, I’ll leave them be…for now.”

He had no doubt that Nico would hold this over them for a long time. Percy looked back down at his new tattoo again. Yep, still there, slightly red around the edges.

Jason clutched his head and groaned, presumably having a headache spike. “Why are we even *in* Vegas?” He asked no one in particular.

The others looked at Grover, who scrubbed his bald head absently. “Okay, so your guys’ memory loss seems to be a lot worse than ours. We’re here to celebrate *my* marriage.”

“Oh, man, Grover, I'm sorry we ruined your bachelor party.” Percy honestly felt bad.

“Wellllll…you didn’t ruin it so much as you hijacked it. Which, honestly from what I remember at least, was actually a pretty great night. I mean, excluding…you know the whole…” Grover pointed between Percy and Jason. “…that.”

“Right, that.” Jason stared at his ring. “What do we tell the girls, Percy?”

Percy looked at him, “The truth. It’s only fair to them. We got drunk

and fucked up. Bad."

Jason clenched his fist and looked around the room. "Why did we even start drinking? And why don't I remember coming to Vegas in the first place, what kind of drink would make us lose our memories from *before* we got drunk?"

Grover bleeted nervously, his legs shuffling a bit like he wanted to pace around. "This is all my fault, I'm so sorry. I'm a homewrecker!" He cried, before sitting on the end of the bed, his back to Percy and Jason with his head in his hands. The motion pulled the blanket down some and Percy had to grip it tightly to avoid flashing everyone.

"Grover, it's not your fault these two idiots started drinking it. You aren't their mom." Nico had absolutely no sympathy for them today, it seems.

"Yeah man, why do you think that?" Leo asked. Grover just whimpered and didn't say anything.

Nico sighed, "He probably blames himself because he brought the wine Mr. D gave him as a wedding present. It was pretty strong."

Willingly putting anything into your body given to you by a god was on the list of Top Ten Things Percy Jackson Does Not Do. Especially since it was from his least favorite god. He knew he would never knowingly drink the wine, so what had happened? "Grover," Percy said slowly, "What wine?"

"I don't even drink," Jason mumbled again.

Percy ignored him, “Grover-”

“Hey, it’s not his fault okay?” Nico said, “From what I remember, you two were shoving your tongues down each other’s throats long before you ever even picked up the bottle.”

“It’s true, Frank and I tried to pull you guys apart but, well…” Leo shrugged, “When you two are determined to do something, not much can stop you. So we backed off. You said you knew what you were doing.”

“Wait, wait, wait. Leo, you think Percy and I would just start kissing right out of the blue like that? You just...found that normal?” Jason pointed his finger between himself and Percy. “Didn’t question it at all, maybe wonder why two guys in happy relationships would do that?”

Percy thought he heard Will scoff under his breath in the corner behind Nico. “ *Happy?* ” But it was too quiet for him to be sure.

Frank came to Leo’s defense. “Of course we thought it was weird, that’s why we tried to stop you. But you seemed sober when you talked to us so we just...besides it’s you and Percy so like, I guess it wasn’t- *oof.* ” Leo elbowed him in the side hard.

“You guess it wasn’t *what* , Frank?” Percy asked, staring him down.

“What Frank is trying to say is, maybe you just wanted to try something new? You know, what happens in Vegas, stays...in…” The incredulous look Jason was giving Leo made him trail off. “Okay, fine. You were adamant that you two were getting married, and we thought you were joking but then apparently you weren’t because now it’s eleven in the morning and you’re in the honeymoon suite. No one has

a consistent timeline of last night's events so we're all playing this by ear here. If I knew everything that was said at the start of the night, I would *tell you* , Jason."

Grover twisted his upper body around to face them, "It was only supposed to cause sporadic memory loss pockets around the time you took a drink of it. That's what happened to us, everytime we took a drink, we blacked out for a short period of time, but for some reason you two lost the whole night."

Jason rubbed his temples and exhaled slowly. "Where's the bottle, Grover? Can we take a look at it?"

He nodded, "The bottles are in my room. We can pick them up on the way out of the hotel. Check out is at eleven thirty, so we should probably hurry up and get back to the *Argo II* and start heading home."

Just thinking about the conversation he was going to have with Annabeth when they got back was making a new headache pop up on top of his hangover one. "Alright, everyone out." They looked bewildered, so Percy gestured with his hand at the door. "Shoo, go, please. We need to get dressed and…"

"Talk." Jason said firmly.

Percy nodded, "Yes, talk."

They were reluctant to leave but they slowly filed out, promising to wait in the hallway for them. As soon as the others were gone they fell into a silence. It was a comfortable silence, not awkward like Percy thought it was going to be.

A hand on his made him jump. Jason picked it up and turned it around, running a thumb over Percy's knuckles. They were raw and red.

"You must've gotten into a fight last night. Your lip is split too." His forehead was creased, trying to find memories that weren't there. Percy touched a spot on it and Jason hissed, bringing his hand up to feel the cut there.

"I think you headbutted someone."

"Maybe you punched me in the head," Jason said dryly.

Percy snorted, "You probably deserved it. Or it could have been another brick. I'm half convinced that things are just magnetically attracted to your skull by now." He wondered if they were both avoiding the real conversation they should be having by bantering back and forth.

"Har har, get a new joke, Jackson. One I haven't heard before."

"Is it?" He said quietly, fingers playing with the edge of the blanket.

"Is what?" Jason asked, confused.

Percy met his eyes. "My last name. Is it still Jackson?"

“I-,” Jason picked up the marriage contract and application, “-don’t know. These don’t say anything about that. Although if I took your name I’m going to be pissed because ‘Jason Jackson’ sounds atrocious.” He handed them to Percy.

He took them and set them on his table without looking at them. “Percy Grace isn’t much better. They both sound awful.” Percy rolled his shoulders, feeling the stiffness in them. “Come on, let's shower and get going, I don’t want to make the others wait forever. The sooner we get back to camp the sooner we can fess up to the girls. I don’t think they’d appreciate hearing about this over an IM or a phone call.”

“Percy, they’re going to hate us.” Jason looked miserable. “Piper’s already been acting weird lately, I’m scared about how she’s going to react.”

He put a hand on Jason’s shoulder, trying to comfort him. “Hey, what did I tell you last week? Keep your chin up and just be there for her. Whatever it is she’s working through, she’ll tell you when she’s ready.”

Jason leaned into the touch for a moment before pulling away and swinging his legs off the bed on his side, the blanket still covering his lap. “I know. Thank you, it helps to have someone to talk to about this.”

“Yeah, man, I’ll always be here if you need someone to listen. I’m not the only one though, you can talk to Leo too, he’s your best friend.”

“But he’s also Piper’s best friend so it feels weird to talk about her with him.” Jason huffed, “Sometimes I wish for the simpler days when all we had to stress about was where the next monster was going to come from, not why my girlfriend’s been avoiding me unless there’s other people around us.”

“Hey now, we still have to deal with monsters. It’s just now we get the joys of also dealing with girlfriend troubles.” Percy stretched and swung his legs off the bed on the opposite side. “I need a shower, I have Vegas all over me.”

Jason threw a wry look at him over his shoulder, “If by Vegas you mean green glitter, then yes you do. Especially in your hair.”

“My hair?” He threaded his fingers into it and shuffled them around. A good amount of sparkly green flecks floated down. “I hate this, I’m never going to get all of this out.” He stood up from the bed, fighting his sore body’s wishes to lay back down, and walked around it towards the bathroom.

“It’ll be fi-Percy!” Jason turned his head sharply, averting his eyes from Percy’s naked body. “Dude, what the fuck. I can see your ass.”

Percy raised an eyebrow at him. “You did a lot more to my ass last night then just look at it, Jason. I figured we’re well past being embarrassed.”

Jason turned an alarming shade of red, the flush spreading down his chest, and his eyes flicked back to where they’d been almost unconsciously before snapping up to his face. “It’s not like I *know* what I did.”

“Even if *we* don’t, my ass knows what you did.”

“It doesn’t hurt too bad does it?”

“It’s not unbearable,” He told him truthfully. What he didn’t tell him, what he could barely admit to himself, was that it hurt in a *good* way. His body liked the reminder of what had been done to it, and it craved more of the same. Percy still couldn’t recall the details about the sex they’d had but he was certain that it was some of the best he’d ever had. He didn’t know how he knew, he just did. That in equal parts terrified and excited him.

Jason breathed a sigh of relief, like he had been worried he’d seriously hurt him. “Still, I’m sorry.”

“Do you always apologize to the people you fuck?” He opted for a lighter, teasing tone.

Jason glared at him and threw the blanket off his lap and stood up too. Percy fought the random urge he got to bring his gaze lower. “For more than that, dick. I meant for everything else that happened too.” He raised his left hand and pointed to the ring on it.

“I doubt it was your idea alone. For what it’s worth, I’m sorry too. Come on, the damage is done, nothing we can do about it now. Let's clean up.” He walked to the bathroom and pushed open the door. He cried out in happiness when he saw the bottle of Advil on the counter. He went for it immediately, pouring four into his hand and using the gross tap water from the faucet to wash it down.

Jason followed him inside and flicked on the lights Percy hadn’t bothered with. He silently handed him the bottle and Jason took it gratefully, using the little paper cup next to the sink for water instead of bending his head under the faucet like he had.

While Jason was doing that Percy wandered around the bathroom. It was a pretty good size for a hotel bathroom, although Leo had said it was the honeymoon suite so he guessed that made sense. The shower

was easily large enough to fit two people comfortably and the bathtub that sat on a raised platform outside of it was one of the biggest bathtubs Percy had ever seen. It was also full of blankets, like someone had made a nest in it and then slept there. Must be where Bloody Axel crashed last night.

"Oh what in the…" Percy pulled on a scrap of glittery fabric tangled up in the makeshift bed. It stretched a bit before finally coming free of the blankets. He held it up and discovered that it was a sparkly, sequined leotard. Much too small for someone Axel's size to squeeze into. Percy briefly wondered if strippers had been involved in last night's mayhem, but then disregarded that thought. Strippers didn't wear leotards, they were too hard to take off. This looked more like a showgirl outfit. He made his way back to the sink and tossed the monstrosity on the counter, where about a million pieces of glitter fluttered off of it.

Jason eyed it critically, "Ah, the source of your magnificent hair style."

"Mhm."

"Wonder where we picked that up at. We probably don't want to know."

"I'm honestly fine with that." He pointed over his shoulder at the walk in shower. "You wanna go first?"

Jason brushed past him and caught his wrist along the way, pulling him with him. "We're already naked, might as well save some time and shower together. We probably only have about twenty minutes left until check out anyways."

Percy swallowed nervously but followed him into the shower. He had to admit that it was logical and besides, Jason's dick had been *inside* him at some point last night. Any boundary lines were well and truly crossed by now. Showering together couldn't be that much worse than waking up naked in bed with him.

A Steamy Situation

Chapter Notes

Well fellas, I put the E rating to use in this one

Also, two chapters in one day and I still wanna write more

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Percy was wrong, so so wrong.

As soon as he stepped into the spray from the shower head that was fixed into the tiled ceiling of the shower, he immediately started feeling better. It didn't heal all his aches and bruises because it was ultra processed city water, but the warmth felt amazing. His muscles loosened up, he closed his eyes and leaned back against the wall with a moan, just enjoying the feeling of calm that the water gave him. He opened his eyes to find Jason watching him, his blue eyes intense as they looked him up and down. Water cascaded over Jason's chest and ran in rivulets down his abs and thighs. Percy could *feel* each curve and dip on Jason's body that the water clung to as it made its way down. He shut down his senses quickly, dulling the connection to the water. Jason still watched him, his face unreadable. Instead of the feeling of self consciousness he thought would wash over him he felt something stir low in his belly. Alarmed and slightly ashamed he cleared his throat and pushed off the wall.

He grabbed the bottle of body wash and the washcloth, handing them to Jason, then picked up the shampoo and got started on working the glitter out of his hair. In front of him, Jason soaped up the washcloth and rubbed it over his chest and down his stomach, concentrating on what he was doing. Percy averted his eyes, feeling like a pervert and feeling bad that he'd allowed himself to look. What the fuck was wrong with him? He had a *girlfriend* . Jason was his bro. Well, technically he's his husband now but that's not an excuse.

He shook his head and dipped it under the water, letting the soap and glitter run down the drain. Percy pulled his head out of the water,

pushing his wet hair back with his hands, hoping that he got most of the sparkles out. While Jason rinsed off, Percy washed his body methodically, being careful not to run the cloth over his new tattoo. He wasn't sure that the scented soap would feel too great on the abraded skin. While Jason had his eyes closed under the water, Percy took the opportunity to wash the lube and, what he could only assume was, cum out from between his legs and his ass cheeks, wincing as he ran his fingers over the tender ring of muscle there.

Jason finished rinsing his body and left the cascading water. He reached beside Percy to grab the shampoo bottle that sat in the little alcove indented into the tiled wall, but his hand froze halfway there.

His eyes were fixed further down south then was strictly modest and Percy followed his gaze to his own hips. What had caught Jason's attention were the long, faint bruises that were just barely visible there. Jason let his hand wander towards them.

"What are these fro-" He started, only to cut himself off when the shadow of his fingers fell over the bruises, lining up perfectly.

Percy blushed furiously, the warmth spreading fast under his skin, as he realized what had been happening when he got those bruises. His mortification increased when he felt his cock twitch. *No, not now. Why now?* He thought.

Jason's breathing was shallow and for the life of him Percy wished he could read his expression. Slowly Jason's hand continued it's path to his hips. Percy watched him, wondering what he planned to do. Right before their skin touched, Jason looked up, as if asking for permission, his blue eyes questioning and clouded with something he couldn't place. Percy nodded while his brain screamed *Push him away!* He didn't listen to it.

His long fingers settled over the marks, covering them entirely, applying a light pressure. Percy inhaled sharply, feeling the spike of arousal run through him again. His cock started to slowly fill out. “Jason.” He wasn’t sure if it was a warning or a plea. What was happening?

The blond took a step closer, his other hand coming up to mirror the other set of bruises. Percy backed up until he felt the wall behind him, Jason following him, never breaking contact.

“I’m sorry if I hurt you last night.” Jason said, his voice low and rumbly.

“I thought we already had that conversation.” He breathed, too scared to look down and see the evidence of his arousal, which was just now starting to lift. Gods, please no. *Go down, go down, go down,* he chanted in his head to no avail.

“I-” Jason swallowed, his throat bobbing, “I hadn’t seen these yet.” His hands squeezed a little bit tighter and Percy’s eyes fluttered closed as it sent a jolt of pleasure straight through him. The dull, almost imperceptible ache from the bruises should not have turned him on as much as it did. Why wasn’t Jason moving away?

“It’s f-fine. They don’t bother me.” Jason searched his face for a moment before turning his gaze downwards and Percy could’ve sunk right through the floor because his erection was *definitely* noticeable now.

Jason breathed heavily once, in, out, his chest expanding and contracting. “I can see that.”

Percy let his head thunk against the tile and turned his face away,

heart racing. “I’m so sorry, I don’t…I didn’t mean to-” Jason crowded closer to him and Percy felt the unmistakable length of a hard cock pressing into his thigh. Percy turned his head back in surprise, only to come face to face with him. Jason looked just as surprised as he felt, like he couldn’t believe this was really happening. “Jason, what are we doing?” He whispered.

“I don’t know.” He said, his eyes flitting around Percy's face.

“We shouldn’t be doing this.”

“No, we shouldn’t.” Jason agreed. He stayed where he was.

Percy’s arms, which had previously been hanging useless at his sides, came up and he settled his hands on Jason’s shoulders, then down to his sides, and finally his hips. His eyes tracked their path down, noting the two little holes on the top of Jason’s thigh, the skin around them slightly raised and red. He brushed a thumb against the wounds, wondering what caused them. Jason’s leg muscle jerked and he looked down.

He grunted in surprise. “Did I get bit by a vampire?” He said jokingly.

“Do you have the irrational urge to suck my-”

Jason’s head whipped up, his eyes wide.

“-blood.” Percy finished. “I was…I was going to say blood.”

Jason chuckled nervously, “Right, yeah no I know that. And, uh no. To the...the blood s-sucki- *mmph.* ”

Percy kissed him. He wasn’t quite sure why he did, he just...wanted to. So he did. Their lips pressed together as they looked at each other, neither of them moving. His split lip stung a little, but it was inconsequential to everything else that was happening.

Jason shuffled to the side a fraction and their erections brushed together. Percy whimpered and leaned back, parting the connection of their lips. “I-” For once in his life Percy didn’t have anything to say. Jason was breathing hard, staring at the wall behind Percy’s head, the spray from the showerhead sprinkling over his broad shoulders.

Percy tried again, “We have girlfriends.” It felt like something that should be said.

It got Jason’s attention at least. His fingers flexed on Percy’s skin and their eyes met. He said, “This is wrong.” Right before he crashed their lips together and pressed his body up against Percy’s, their hard cocks trapped between them.

It was a quick kiss, over faster than he would have liked. But then Jason was sinking to his knees in front of him, his dick jutting up obscenely from between his thighs, his hands pinning Percy’s hips to the tiled wall of the shower. They were so fucked.

Blue eyes peered up at him and it was all he could do not to look away under the roll of arousal that plagued him. “What are you doing,” Percy whispered, even as he threaded his fingers into Jason’s wet hair.

“Oh, you know, just baking a cake.” He said, breathlessly.

Percy huffed, “I meant dow- *haaaaaa* …” He sighed, his breath leaving him all at once as Jason pressed a kiss to the base of his cock.

“I don’t even know how to do this.” He mumbled against the hot skin there. That apparently wasn’t enough to discourage him, because the next thing Percy knew, he was running his tongue up the underneath of his hard length and then sucking the head into his mouth. The inside of Jason’s mouth was unbearably soft and warm as he took him down inch by inch, as much as he could.

Percy choked, wanting to thrust forwards into that wet heat but he was still pinned by one of Jason’s hands. He didn’t see where the other one went, but he didn’t question it too long because then Jason’s mouth was moving on him and every thought he had flew out the proverbial window. The blond drew back irritatingly slowly, tonguing the slit on the swollen head of the cock in his mouth, which made Percy’s knees shake, before taking him back in. If Percy had been in control of his chaotic thoughts in that moment he would’ve been impressed by the way Jason hadn’t even so much as gagged when his nose bumped against Percy’s skin and the head of his cock nudged the back of his throat. He sped up.

He was no stranger to blowjobs, he had a girlfriend after all, and maybe it was just the shock factor talking, but he didn’t remember them ever feeling as good as this. Not to insult Annabeth’s cocksucking abilities or anything, it’s just that Jason was so *enthusiastic* about it. He breathed in little huffs out of his nose every time he drew back and he moaned and groaned like he was enjoying every minute of it. Every sound he made sent vibrations straight through his cock and into his spine. Jason said he hadn’t known how to do this but if there was a dick sucking contest he’d have Annabeth beat by miles.

“ *Ohhhhh* , J-jason.” He stuttered, “Mmmmm, feels g-good, *gods* don’t stop.” He shouldn’t look down, but he couldn’t resist.

Jason was looking up at him, his eyes heavy lidded and his lips stretched tight around Percy's cock as it disappeared in and out of his mouth. His shoulder moved rapidly and the realization that he was pumping his own cock as he sucked him off sent another spike of arousal through him. The heat writhed in his stomach faster and he felt his balls start to draw up.

Moaning, he tightened his fingers in Jason's hair, not guiding him or anything, just using it to hold onto while he fell apart. Jason's eyelids fluttered shut. He swirled his tongue around the head of his cock on the upstroke, collecting the precum that was leaking from it and if it wasn't for the hand on his hip holding him against the wall, Percy was absolutely certain that his knees would've buckled.

He panted, throwing his head back, " *Ughn* , I-I'm gonna, Jason, I-" Percy tried to warn him, but instead of pulling off and, oh he doesn't know maybe finishing him with his hand like a decent person, he let his cock slip from his mouth with an audible *pop* and stood up. Percy's whine of frustration was muffled when Jason fitted their lips back together, his tongue running along his bottom lip, begging entrance. He opened his mouth and Jason licked his way inside of it. He tasted himself on Jason's tongue and it was absurd how erotic he found that.

Jason's hand left his hip and he rested his arm on the wall above Percy's head, his extra height allowing him to lean over him, his arm muscles flexing as caged him in. He tilted his head up, chasing their kiss, and Jason's other hand scrambled at Percy's thigh, finally getting it to hitch up and over his own hip where Percy wrapped it around him and locked him in close. Their leaking cocks thrust against their abs and each other and Jason was probably going to grab them both but Percy was faster, wrapping his long fingers around them and pumping fast, chasing the high that was quickly approaching.

Jason's free hand found better things to do as it slid over the wet flesh of Percy's ass, squeezing it briefly before travelling further, his fingers running down the crack and brushing against his entrance where they

paused. Percy made a high pitched noise in the back of his throat, his hand losing its rhythm momentarily then picking it back up, faster than before. Jason's hips thrust with his movements, Percy's leg clinging on tightly.

The fingers on his hole started to rub, sending little shocks through him that he didn't even know were possible to feel, the sensation new and strange but so fucking good. Jason pressed his index finger in firmly, his intention clear, and Percy let himself relax, letting him explore. His finger slipped past the ring of muscle, burying it up to the second knuckle and Percy jerked once, eyes rolling up in his head, before he was spilling over his hand, painting Jason's chest in his cum. A few more sporadic thrusts of his hand and he felt Jason shudder, his shout muffled by Percy's mouth, and then hot ropes of cum were splashing against his abs as he too fell over the edge.

They rested their heads on each other's shoulders as they both came down from the clouds, Jason slipped his finger out of Percy's body, making him grunt at the unexpected feeling. Their messy chests heaved, bushing together. Percy let his leg fall and he opened his eyes, staring at the wet skin underneath him. He caught sight of his spill sliding down the indentation of Jason's abs where it skirted around the edge of his belly button and the sight was so lewd and filthy that it had him blushing all the way to the roots of his hair.

He held onto him, waiting for the feeling of guilt to settle in, but to his surprise it never did, which made him feel worse than ever. They didn't have the excuse of being drunk this time. They both knew what they were doing, and continued anyway, regardless.

Jason was the first to lean back, his arm still supporting him against the wall. He looked down at him, his lips slightly parted as he searched Percy's face. "If I knew-" He paused to catch his breath, "If I knew that sucking your dick would get you to finally stop running your mouth I might've done it ages ago." His voice raspy from the work his throat had been doing earlier.

Percy rolled his eyes and bumped their foreheads together softly, being careful of the sore spot on Jason's. "We shouldn't have done that." He said quietly.

"I know. It wasn't fair to the girls, and we're horrible people for doing it a second time." At least he was being honest. He pressed a gentle kiss to Jason's lips because the urge to do so struck him again, the action so much more intimate than what they'd just done. Jason returned it before letting his arm fall away from the wall and he stepped back. "Why did you do that?" He asked, his fingers coming up to feel his lips in wonder.

"Why did you deepthroat my cock two minutes ago?" He retorted, the words falling from his mouth before they passed his mental filter, like usual.

Jason turned red, but he didn't back down. "You're welcome for that, by the way." He cleared his throat and swallowed, like he was remembering the feeling of it being crammed full of dick.

Percy snorted, "Please, it looked like you were enjoying yourself down there just as much as I was." He put a hand on his hip and smirked at his husband.

Unexpectedly, Jason surged forwards and wrapped him up in a hug. "Thank you, for not being weird about this. Or...awkward. I-I don't want this to ruin our friendship."

He returned the hug, extremely aware of the fact that they were still very much nude. "It won't, bro. At least we got to use our dicks one more time before the girls cut them off. And it's plenty weird but, you know it's just like, platonic dick sucking or something. We don't have to let it mean anything if we don't want it to." It was a lie. Such a lie. It *had* meant something, but what, he didn't know yet. Platonic? No,

definitely not, not with the way his heart constricted on it's own accord. Seriously, what was *wrong* with him. He felt no guilt over the fact that in less than twenty four hours he'd fucked the same guy twice while his girlfriend sat at home waiting for him to get back. He was a despicable human being.

"Right, exactly, we-it didn't have to mean anything." Jason's voice sounded just as false as his had. They both chose to ignore that. He grabbed the shampoo and stepped back, "Okay, let's hurry up and finish actually showering before the others come looking for us, because Nico would never let us live this down."

They washed the evidence of their actions down the drain and stepped out of the shower wrapped in fluffy hotel towels.

"Um," Percy said, "I don't think we have any clean clothes in this room...Actually where are our suitcases? We must have brought them with us." They both looked to the bathtub nest. "You don't think…"

Jason shrugged and walked over to it, systematically pulling the blanket out of it. The blanket itself was huge, it had to have been king sized at *least* . Halfway out of the tub, it untwisted and two suitcases tumbled out, along with a bottle of empty tequila. Sharpied on the side of the bottle was *Axel's Private Stock: DO NOT TOUCH (this means you, Grant!)*. Another tug on the blanket and a pair of pants fell out. The bottom of the tub was sprinkled in green glitter.

"Hey!" Percy said, bending down to retrieve the pants, "These are mine, but I thought...I thought mine were on the T.V."

"Oh, no the T.V. pants are definitely mine. Uh, Percy." He looked up to see Jason pointing at the front of the jeans he held up. "You might wanna take a look at what's on your belt loop."

Percy turned the pants and saw a pair of high quality metal handcuffs dangling from the front, one side closed around his left belt loop. The handcuffs were branded with *LVPD* under each keyhole. A sense of dread filled him when he saw the dried blood smeared across the cuff that was locked around his pants. “Oh, shit. These are actual police handcuffs, Jason. What the fuck did we do last night?”

Jason looked just as shaken as he did, his face white. “Well we’re all accounted for, right? So that’s good, no ones in jail. Whatever it was, it must not have been too bad, right?”

Percy just pointed to the blood and didn’t say anything.

“Okay, yes, I see that, bro. Nothing we can do about it.” Jason retrieved his own suitcase and set it on the counter, unzipping it. He pulled out a fresh shirt, a pair of pants and socks along with the bag that held his toothbrush and toothpaste.

Percy sighed and copied him on the other side of the sink, standing next to him while they brushed their teeth. Jason leaned over the sink to spit and his wedding ring clinked against the ceramic bowl, startling them both. Percy had forgotten about them, his own ring warm and oddly comfortable on his finger. They hurried up and finished brushing their teeth and got dressed. On the way out of the bathroom he chucked Axel’s tequila bottle into the garbage and draped the leotard over his elbow. In the main room they went around and collected their scattered belongings, Jason holding up his pants and showing off the two little holes in the leg that matched the ones on his thigh. They found a few more random items like a set of matching bowie knives that they hastily shoved into their suitcases and Jason's shirt which for some reason had five identical stickers on it that said *Bernie's 4430 YUM* on them. Jason looked at them in confusion before the shirt joined the knives in the suitcase. They also discovered Jason's wallet strapped to the backside of the pineapple with the wedding garters. It was absolutely stuffed full of fifty dollar bills and Jason was adamant that he had nowhere near that amount of

money in his bank account. After guiltily slipping it into his back pocket he turned and picked up the gift basket and fished out the box of unopened condoms.

Jason shook his head, “Gods, we’re so stupid.”

“Hey at least I can’t get pregnant, right?” A disturbing thought occurred to him, “R-right? I mean I never thought about it before but your dad had Athena by himself, but we can’t do that...right?”

Jason laughed at him, tossing the box back in the basket and setting it next to the pineapple, “No, Percy, male demigods can’t get pregnant. At least not in the known history of man, so I think we’re good, dude.”

Percy nodded, “Good, just making sure, ya know. I’ve seen a lot of impossible stuff happen in my life.”

“We don’t have anything to worry about.”

The lock clicked to their door and Leo walked in, the others milling about in the hallway behind him. “Oh, good, you're ready to go. I thought I heard voices. Come on, we’ve got a problem.”

“What kind of problem, Leo?” Jason asked, immediately on alert.

Leo chewed his lip before saying, “No one can find Coach Hedge.”

Chapter End Notes

Would you believe that was first time I ever wrote an actually explicit sex scene before?

Memory of a Fruit

Chapter Notes

> This ones a short one because I am in the process of moving right now but I wanted to get something out for you guys. I should be all moved in by the end of the week and then I can start updating more like I usually do.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Percy's heart jumped into his throat. "Coach Hedge is missing?" He shared a look with Jason.

"Come on, Percy, we don't know that they're related. Let's not jump to any conclusions just yet."

From right inside the doorway Grover said, "What's related?" He came over to stand behind Leo. "Do you guys know something about Gleeson?"

Jason rolled his eyes, "No, Percy is just being paranoid."

"It could be something! You *know* how Hedge is." Percy unzipped his suitcase and reached inside to grab ahold of the handcuffs. The pants were somewhat stuck with everything else in there so he just broke the thin belt loop and pulled the handcuffs up, displaying them.

Grover turned his head and put his hand over his eyes, "Aw, man! I *do not* want to know what you two got up to in here last night."

"Grover, we did not use these for sex." Percy gave him his most unimpressed look.

“I think.” Jason added. “Still no memories though.”

“Jason, *you are not helping.* Grover, we found these in the bathtub along with my pants and an empty tequila bottle, and-”

“You know, this is just sounding more and more like maybe you *did* .”

He gave a frustrated growl, “Would you just listen to me for one second! These have *blood* on them and they are *actual police handcuffs*. See?” He pointed to the LVPD. “Las Vegas Police Department. Whoever was wearing these got hurt. Could you smell them and see if this blood is from a satyr?”

Grover warily put a hand out and he dropped the cuffs into them. The others huddled around, investigating the dried blood. Grover’s nose twitched as he scented it. “Phewee, Percy, man this *your* blood.” He held them at arm's length away from him, pointing his face away so he couldn’t catch another whiff.

“Well I mean, they were on his pants, I don’t know what you were expecting.” Jason said.

“My blood? Are you sure, because I’m not bleeding from anywhere?”

Grover handed them back to him. “Salty ocean brine and enough magical power to burn my nose hairs. Yeah dude, it’s yours, there’s no mistaking that.”

He weighed them in his hands, “Alright, I just...have no idea where it

came from. Or these for that matter. Do any of you have any memories of us running into the police?" He asked.

They all shook their heads. Frank said, "Must have happened around the time you got the pineapple. Didn't Axel say you got separated last night?"

"Okay, so sometime between getting married and coming back to the hotel, we somehow managed to encounter the police and acquire a pineapple." Jason shrugged, "Yeah I've got nothing. Let's worry about the cuffs later. Percy's obviously not hurt, apart from his bruised hi-*hands.* Knuckles." He corrected, studiously avoiding Percy's pointed stare, his ears pink. "And his split lip, so it's not really a pressing issue." He cleared his throat and picked up his suitcase. "So, uh, let's go find Hedge before he gets into too much trouble."

"Ahh, yes. His bruised hihands, Will. We know all about those, don't we?" Nico said, trying to keep a straight face.

He elbowed Will a few times who snickered along with him and added, "Yes, quite the serious issue. Usually happens when too much force is applied to the hihands. You know, like during a ' *fight'* or something equally as-"

"Hey! Uh, so does anyone have any clue where to start looking for Coach at? Because, I don't know about you all, but I'm extremely worried about him and would like to leave now." Percy butted in before Will could continue.

Frank was eyeing Will like he was worried he'd bumped his head. "We know how you get bruised knuckles, Will, it's not a medical mystery. You never punched somebody before?"

Will bit his lip. “Oh, Frank. Yes, I have. I just know *you* haven’t.”

“Of course I haven’t. Fist fights aren’t my thing.”

Jason looked like he was about to die from mortification any minute now. Nico’s face was lit up in amusement as he gave Percy the ‘I’m gonna tell him’ look. Percy shot him the ‘do it and you’ll regret it’ look. Grover and Leo were as confused as Frank, bless them.

“Okay we really don’t need to be discussing fist fights while one of my satyrs is missing. Gleeson had the room that adjoined to you and Jason’s old room.” Grover told him, trying to get things back on track. “When you two weren't in your room we rushed to find you before checking his room. I ran back there a few minutes ago and he was missing too. But the clerk said he never got upgraded, obviously because, well, he didn’t get-”

“Yes, Grover, thank you for pointing out our infidelity. Again. Because it had totally slipped our minds.” Jason said, clinking his wedding ring on the handle of his suitcase.

“Alright, alright, no need to get testy, Grace. I think we should start in his room. He left all his things there so there might be clues. Also, you guys have a few things left in your old room too. You should see if there’s anything worth keeping while we're over there, housekeeping hasn’t hit it yet.”

Grover led the way out of the room. Percy grabbed the pineapple, feeling oddly connected to it for some reason and was reluctant to leave it behind. It’s possible he’d gotten arrested with it, after all. Maybe they were cell mates. That kinda bond was special.

Jason went to follow the satyr but then paused a moment and pulled

his wallet out and left two fifty dollar bills on the coffee table for the maid who had to deal with the mess they'd made of this suite. Percy fought a smile, somewhat touched by the gesture.

Jason noticed him watching and shrugged self consciously. "Always tip well, you have no idea what they get taxed out of their paychecks." He held the door for Percy and when he passed by he noticed the fruit. "Oh you grabbed my pine...apple…" His eyes unfocused.

Percy watched them get distant, seeing something that wasn't there and then the hallway in front of Percy was getting fuzzy as his vision started to go too. He looked down at the pineapple but now it was...different. A bright spotlight shone on it as it sat on an empty wooden table, no longer wrapped in wedding garters. He blinked and he was back in the hotel. Jason made a small noise of surprise in the back of his throat. The others turned back curiously.

"Did...did you see that?" Percy asked him. Wide eyed, Jason nodded.

"You two okay back there? Listen, if you're gonna hurl, try not to do it around me okay, I'm sensitive to vomit," Leo said.

Jason shook his head, "No, no we...I just thought I remembered something but...but I'm not sure."

"We can talk it over later, come on." Percy left the room and Jason let the door shut behind them.

Leo shrugged and turned back around, Grover leading the pack to Hedge's room. About half way there they passed the laundry room, large rolling cloth bins lined up outside the door getting ready to be toted around so the maids could change all the bed sheets.

As Percy walked by the last one he almost didn't see the fabric inside it move. He almost drew his sword, but then a familiar hairy leg thrust it's way out of the mound of sheets. He sighed and signaled the others to stop. He reached inside the laundry bin and grabbed Hedge's ankle, pulling him up a little.

The satyr bleeted and backed his way out of the tangle of cloth. His short little legs kicked around in the air a moment before he was able to tip himself out of the tall bin. His hooves landed with a muffled *thump* and Coach Hedge turned around, a white sheet caught between his teeth as he munched on it. He bit a chunk off and chewed it. "There you little trouble makers are! Hey, did you know that this is one hundred percent Egyptian cotton? It's incredible!" He brandished a handful at them. He took notice of the full group then, "Oh, and you even brought Mr. and Mr. Trouble themselves!"

Chapter End Notes

> This ones a short one because I am in the process of moving right now but I wanted to get something out for you guys. I should be all moved in by the end of the week and then I can start updating more like I usually do.

Hedge's Story

Chapter Notes

Another short one today

Hedge took another bite of the sheets. “Mmm mmm, Grover you have *got* to taste these! Simply exquisite.” He offered the fabric to the other satyr.

Grover looked like he was seriously contemplating having a sample when Jason took the sheet from Hedge and tossed it back into the laundry bin. “We are in the middle of a *mortal* ,” Jason lowered his voice as an elderly couple wandered passed, “hotel, what are you doing?”

“Please do not eat the linen, guys. We already have enough problems as it is without having to add destruction of hotel property to the list.” Percy said.

Hedge huffed and tapped his hoof against the carpet. “What, so you two can drink enough alcohol to kill Dionysus himself and go on an all night party adventure but *I* can’t enjoy the simple pleasure of eating high quality fiber?” He snorted. “Some of us-” Hedge stopped and quickly amended his statement, “ *one of us* didn’t have the luxury of being intoxicated.”

Percy’s stomach suddenly felt queasy after hearing about how much alcohol the satyr had claimed he’d consumed. If he was being honest Percy was mad that he’d allowed himself to drink at all let alone that much.

“Wait, Coach you didn’t drink last night?” Jason asked him.

“Drink?” Hedge rolled his eyes, “Well of course not! I’m the *chaperone.* What kinda protector would I be if I had?” All of a sudden his face turned hard and he glared at Percy and Jason. “You little heathens were supposed to drunk-babysit with me. Imagine my surprise when misters ‘we hate alcohol and never drink it’ ended up getting absolutely plastered and running off for half the night with no adult supervision! That no alcohol policy turned into a drink-for-drink pact very quickly. Everytime one of you took a drink the other did too. At one point you and Jackson had a contest to see who could do more shots in a row. Percy ended up winning because he used his freaky water powers to levitate the vodka into his mouth after you both fell on the floor of the bar.” Percy felt a cold slimy tendril of revulsion worm its way into his body. Ever since Tartarus he tried to avoid manipulating anything but water. Seems he slipped on more than one of his morals last night. A quick glance at Jason and he corrected himself. More than a few of his morals. He never officially put ‘don’t marry and fuck your best friend’ on that list but he thought that went without saying. Coach Hedge kept talking, “I mean, don’t get me wrong, fifteen shots back to back was pretty impressive, but it was still rude to leave me hanging like that.”

Something else dawned on him. “Wait, the bar? We did shots at a bar? *How?* Frank and I are the only ones that are twenty one, don’t these places check ID?” He asked incredulously.

“Hey, I turn twenty one next month!” Jason protested then, in a quieter tone, “Oh my gods I’m not even twenty one and I’m already married.”

Coach Hedge studied his nails absently, “Oh well did you know, Jackson, it’s common law that if someone’s spouse is of legal drinking age then they can vouch for them and they can order drinks even if they're underage? Because I didn’t until I turned around and saw Grace carrying a platter full of shots.”

“What about the rest of us? Will and I are eighteen, Coach, how did we get away with it?” Nico asked.

Hedge shrugged and started off towards his room before answering. “You two only drank the Aqua Vitae so far as I know. You’re the only responsible ones here. Stuck around with me most of the night too. Played a lot of mini golf, it was quite fun actually. Will's a beast at the windmill hole.”

“Aqua Vitae? Is that the wine Mr. D gave Grover?” Percy asked.

Grover nodded in front of him. “It’s supposed to be his best creation. He doesn’t give it out lightly, especially with the restrictions Zeus has on him. I still don’t really know why he gave it to *me* of all people.” He wrung his hands together nervously.

Hedge patted Grover on the shoulder, “He gave it to you because you’re the best Lord of the Wild we’ve had in over three hundred years. You earned it.” Grover preened under the praise. “Although I’m not gonna sugar coat it, kid, that bald head of yours? It’s not the look for you.”

Leo snorted and ruffled his own fluffy hair. “Yeah, man. Us guys with curly hair gotta let it- *OUCH!* Ahhhh haha, what the *fuck?”* He stopped and gingerly ran his hand up the back of his neck where it disappeared under his hair. He winced and lifted it up to reveal that the underneath had been shaved off and a tattoo had been done on the back of his head. “W-what is this? Why does it *hurt?”*

Frank bared his teeth in sympathy, sucking a breath in through them. “Looks like Percy, Jason and I aren’t the only ones who got tattoos last night.”

Leo turned around, eyes wide. “I got my head tattooed? What is it?”

Jason leaned around him again to get another look at it. “It’s a phoenix.”

“That...that’s…” Leo let his hair flop back down. “ *So cool!* ” He said excitedly.

“I mean, it’s kind of fitting all things considered.” Jason shrugged. “At least it isn’t your father’s symbol of power.” His free hand absently hovered over his side.

“I wanna go see it. ” Leo took off down the hallway towards Coach Hedge’s room, which was right around the corner. By the time the rest of them got there the door was wide open and they could see Leo in the bathroom trying to get a good look at the back of his head in the mirror.

Hedge started wandering around and packing his items. Percy indicated a door set into the wall and asked Grover, “Is that our old room?” He nodded. “C’mon, Jason, let’s make sure we didn’t leave anything behind.”

Jason sighed like he wasn’t too enthused to find whatever other odd souvenirs were probably in there. Percy went to open the door.

“Oh, uh, remember not to open the bathroom door and that there’s no functional lights in the room.” Hedge told them from his place over by the T.V.

He paused, hand on the doorknob. “What? Why?”

Hedge looked bewildered when he said, “What do you mean why?”

“They have no memories of last night, Coach.” Will informed him.

“Really? Absolutely nothing?” They shook their heads. “Ah…well when we came back to the hotel last night, water boy over there stubbed his toe on the dresser and the sink exploded. Grace laughed so hard about it he blew all the light bulbs out.” Hedge rolled his eyes, “ And you blamed *me* for destruction of hotel property. You’re both lucky the employees thought it was a freak accident so we didn’t get charged for it. It’s a good thing you guys don’t drink regularly otherwise we’d have a lot more issues around camp.” He turned and went back to packing.

“Hey, Coach?” Frank said, his eyebrows pulled together.

“Hmm?”

“If you didn’t get drunk last night then you still have all your memories right?”

“Guys, it’s a *phoenix!* ” Leo’s voice drifted out of the bathroom. “Oh, it’s such good quality too.”

Hedge snorted but ignored him, answering Frank instead. “That is correct, Zhang.”

Jason ran a hand through his hair excitedly, “That’s great! You can tell us about it then.”

Coach Hedge froze. “Now why would I do that? I’d miss all the fun I’m

going to have watching you get your memories back one by one. Aqua Vitae only causes temporary loss, it'll come back to you slowly." At Percy's angry look Hedge raised his hands in surrender, "Jeez, take a joke every once in a while. I said you'd taken off by yourselves for most of the night so I don't know what happened. I was with you in the beginning of the night, we all met up for the wedding, we got separated, then we met up later on in the parking lot with your biker buddies, got split again and then met at the hotel in the morning. You *will* slowly get your memories back, so be patient and wait."

Percy had no doubt that Coach Hedge knew more than he was letting on, but he was probably still upset about being the only babysitter and consequently getting ditched. He didn't blame him, honestly. He sighed in frustration anyways and pushed open the door to their old room, tugging Jason along behind him before he could argue further with the satyr. The sooner they got back to the *Argo II* the better.

They stopped and surveyed the room. It was surprisingly in much better, if not darker, condition than the one they'd woken up in. Nothing was knocked over, the bed was made, the curtains drawn. Jason went over and threw them open, letting the mid morning sun stream in and light up the room. Only a few things here and there were strewn about.

Jason made an amused noise in the back of his throat as he bent over and picked up something Percy couldn't see yet. He straightened up and showed him a greeting card with a picture of two swans in bow ties and tuxedos on the front. "It's from Thalia."

Immediately interested, Percy walked up to him and read it over his shoulder. The message inside was simple. It said; *Congrats, dorks. I'm glad you two finally got together, you seem happy. Hope you enjoy marriage! P.S. Can't believe you invited that bitch, little brother. P.P.S Hey, Percy, welcome to the family…er…well you know what I mean. Jason and I's family at least. Let's not get into the whole god side of that. Oh, and hurt my brother and I'll gut you like the filthy fish you are. Love ya both! - Thalia*

“How can she be so cool with this?” Percy said. He half expected Thalia to threaten him for cheating on Annabeth but she seemed…happy? No, that wasn’t right. Supportive was a better word. Maybe it was because she was a Hunter and there were no women involved in this marriage. He eyed the line ‘gut you like the filthy fish you are.’ She still managed to work a threat in there at least.

Jason shrugged, “I have no clue. It’s Thalia, I never know what to expect from her.”

They stared at the card for a minute more before going through the rest of their left behind belongings.

Rodrigo's Bar

Chapter Notes

> We get a lil' bit of Jason's pov in this one, around the middle of the chapter. There will be more from his pov later as well

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In terms of souvenirs from their drunken adventure, there was surprisingly little in their old room. They did find another marriage certificate that appeared to be from the chapel they got married at. The title at the top declared *Certificate of Marriage* and right under that *King Chapel.*

“You think if we burn this one it’ll nullify it?” Jason said dryly.

Percy snorted, “If only we could be so lucky.” He almost tossed it into the garbage can but at the last second he folded it up and slipped in Jason’s back pocket next to the one from Hera. He wasn’t quite sure why, it had just felt wrong to throw it away. Jason raised an eyebrow at him but said nothing, just tucked it further down so it wouldn’t fall out.

In addition to the other certificate they found a laminated tattoo care sheet, a letter from the hotel front desk, a lone poker chip, Percy’s wallet which was also stuffed full of fifty dollar bills, *another* bottle of lube (unopened thankfully), a receipt for a random bar, and-

“My glasses!” Jason said happily, picking them up from their place on the bedside table and promptly placing them on his face. “Thank the gods, I was worried they’d gotten lost last night.”

“You know one of these days I’m going to get you a Croakie. Maybe it’ll be an anniversary present next year.” Percy told him.

Jason quirked an eyebrow, “What the hell is a Croakie?”

“You don’t...oh my gods you wear glasses and you don’t even-it’s the strap you put on your glasses that goes around your neck so you don’t *lose* them.” To be fair Percy only knew what they were because he’d tried to find a way to help Jason after he complained about how easy it was to misplace his eyewear once when he was looking for them. They had been pushed up on his head but Percy had let him look for another five minutes before finally pointing them out.

“Like those things old ladies wear? No thanks, I’ll take my chances.” Jason picked up the letter from the front desk and read it out loud. “‘Dear tenants in room 509, on behalf of Marriott Hotels we at the Las Vegas branch would like to formally apologize for the malfunctions and damages that have occurred to your room. We understand that this is a huge inconvenience and we strive for perfection and great customer service. We will be issuing you an immediate upgrade to the honeymoon suite in room 570 at no extra charge to your party. We hope this negative experience does not affect your choice to choose Marriott Hotels in the future. If there is anything else you need please don’t hesitate to call us at the front desk. Room 509 will not be cleared out until after checkout time tomorrow at eleven thirty. Should any personal belongings remain after that time they will be thrown away. Congratulations on your nuptials!” He lowered the letter and turned it over to look at the adhesive strip on the back that must’ve had their new room key stuck to it when the letter arrived.

“I feel kind of bad,” Percy said, “We wrecked their hotel room and they apologized to *us.* I hope they didn’t get in trouble for what happened.”

“They probably didn’t,” Jason assured him, “Hotels have insurance for these situations. They’re not going to blame the employees for something they think was a malfunction.”

“Still…” Percy walked over to the bed and copied Jason’s actions from the other room and put two fifty dollar bills on the end of the bed. “For whoever has to deal with this.”

Jason nodded and started gathering the rest of their stuff together. He trashed the letter and the care sheet after reading that too. He tossed the poker chip into his suitcase then picked up the receipt. He whistled low, “Wheeew, we spent almost two hundred dollars at this bar.”

“No way. Is that even possible?” Jason handed him the receipt.

“See for yourself.”

Percy reached out and grabbed the top of the receipt with his index finger and thumb. As soon as he touched the paper his sight started to fade and he was dimly aware of Jason stumbling back a little and bracing himself against the bed. Percy managed to do the same before the vision over took them both.

-Flashback-Rodrigo’s Bar-

Jason’s POV

“Jason Grace, what are you *doing?* Where did you get those?” Coach Hedge pointed to the tray he was carrying that was almost overflowing with shots of vodka. “You are twenty years old, kid, who sold you that alcohol?” The satyr crossed his arms and looked around like the culprit would waltz up and confess.

Jason laughed loudly, patting the coach’s shoulder with his free hand as he walked past him. “S’okay, Coach! My husband’s twenty one, so I can order *an’thing I want,* s’long as he says I can.” His speech slurred a

bit at the end of his sentence and he blinked, confused, trying to figure out why. He was usually very well spoken. Jason shrugged, “Now if you’ll ‘scuse me, I’ve got a contest to win.” He shouted across the bar at Percy and Axel as he pushed his way through the crowd, ignoring Hedge’s grunt of disbelief, “Ya ‘ear that, babe?! I’m gonna kick your ass!”

Percy flipped him off and blew him a kiss at the same time, and when he finally got to the table he said, “You wish! I’m gonna make you regret those words.” His husband picked up an odd looking bottle with a grapevine decoration up the side of it and took a drink.

Jason fumbled for his own bottle, determined to keep the drink-for-drink pact they’d made...sometime earlier, he wasn’t quite sure when. He set the platter of alcohol down and drank from his own bottle. The clear liquid went down smoothly, tasting of sweet summer days and oddly enough brownies. Instantly his head spun and he sat down hard on his stool.

He slammed the bottle back down on the table as the world righted itself again. Coach Hedge appeared at his elbow, looking disapprovingly at the shots. “Jason I really don’t think you two should drink anything but the Aqua Vi-”

Axel threw his arm around Jason’s shoulder, pulling him close and shouting over his head loudly. “Ahhh don’ be a party pooper you old fart! These two are the real deal, man. I ain’ never seen nobody lay someone out flat like that before, they’ve earned these drinks!”

“Yeah, Coach!” Percy joined in, “We’re already drunk, how much worse can it get, amiright?” He punctuated that statement by picking up a shot and throwing it back, downing it in one go. “Whoooo!!!” He hollered, slamming the glass down.

“Hell yeah, brother!” Axel picked a shot glass up and handed it to Jason. The glass was shockingly cold against his flushed skin. He threw Percy a wink before draining it. This alcohol burned on the way down, marking it’s path all the way to his stomach. He gasped for breath and Axel pounded his back. “Takes some gettin’ used to, don’ it? It’ll sure put some hair on your chest though!” He threw his head back and laughed. Hedge rubbed his temples and took a seat, determined to make sure this didn’t get out of hand.

Percy frowned and shouted over the noise of the bar, “I don’t have any body hair!”

At Axel’s confused look Jason explained, “It’s a swimmer thing, makes them more waterodynamico-y…or something like that. Makes ‘em go fast in the water!”

Axel shrugged, “Makes sense to me. In that case,” He picked up a shot and downed it, not even flinching as it went down. He raised his empty glass and said, “It’ll put some hair on *my* chest!”

“Another!” Percy shouted, thrusting a glass into Jason’s hand after picking up one of his own. Vodka splashed over the rim and ran down his hand. Percy bent over and licked it off, his tongue warm and wet and Jason could imagine other places he would enjoy that tongue on but this was a very public bar. And there was a very strict Coach Hedge and a very drunk biker sitting with them. His husband took his shot and Jason followed suit, bearing the scorch down his throat a little better.

Percy leaned over and gave Jason a sloppy kiss, his lips slick with the liquor. Jason greedily returned it, licking the burning alcohol off them for him. Percy hummed and opened his mouth, letting his tongue slide against his. What was he just thinking about? Something about being in public? Nah, probably didn’t matter. “Mmmm,” Jason moaned, blindly setting his glass down to pull his husband closer, halfway into his lap. Percy responded enthusiastically, tilting his head and

deepening the kiss, his hands roaming further and further down, dipping his fingers up under the hem of his shirt.

Axel's piercing wolf whistle made them jerk apart. "Horny lil bastards aren't they?" He nudged Hedge a few times with his elbow and the coach looked absolutely mortified as he pinched the bridge of his nose. "Get a room if yer gonna fuck, or else take this shot-off seriously!"

Percy laughed and Jason watched the way his throat moved as he did it. Such a lovely throat, all long with smooth tanned skin. When he was with Lupa and her wolves, they would show affection by nuzzling against each other's necks. He missed it. Humans never did that, it was always touching hands and pressing lips, which were great, don't get him wrong, but there was just something so comforting about nuzzling. Axel said something else but he was too distracted by the heat coming off of Percy that he didn't hear it. He wanted to do it so bad…

Wait, why shouldn't he do it then? They were married, it wouldn't be weird. Although a small voice in his mind told him that Percy might not know what it meant and could very well find it strange to suddenly have Jason's face pressed against his neck. He remembered the first time he'd gotten the urge to do it to Piper. She'd giggled and pushed his face away firmly. *Stop, Jason. That tickles, what are you doing? Just kiss me.*

She wasn't rude about it but it still stung. She had no idea what it meant to reject an affectionate gesture like that. He didn't let her know how much it'd hurt.

He was hesitant to do it now, but Percy was shuffling around so he was sitting sideways, fully on his lap now, one arm around Jason's shoulders and his body was so close. He leaned in.

The skin at the base of Percy's throat was soft and warm when he nuzzled into it. He smelled like he always did, a combination of salty sea air and his coconut body wash. He inhaled deeply and detected the sharp tang of the alcohol they'd been drinking.

Percy shifted above him and he braced himself for rejection as he drew backwards, but then he was leaning down and...and...nuzzling him back. He made a small noise of surprise as Percy's chest expanded when he scented Jason's own skin. Percy's alcohol flushed face was incredibly hot against his neck when he rubbed it against him. He felt his heart soar and his eyes start to prick with unshed tears, but he refused to be a sappy drunk so he placed a series of kisses against the top of his dark head of hair and when Percy finally lifted his head, he caught his lips in a gentle kiss.

Percy ended the kiss and handed him another shot, clinking his own against it and they drank them at the same time. He acted like it was the most natural thing in the world to do what they'd just done, as if people went around scenting each other's throats like wolves all the time. Maybe to Percy the gesture was normal like it was to Jason. He sometimes forgot that the other boy had spent time with Lupa as well. Certainly not as long as he had, but the first time they'd met Jason had no trouble detecting Percy's more feral habits that he'd picked up from the wolves. In the beginning they'd been wary of each other, like two dominant males overseeing the union of their packs, trying to get a feel for the other. Jason was so glad that feel ended up how it did.

Axel banged his fist against the table and the liquid in the glasses vibrated. "To the newlyweds!" He screamed, his voice booming around the bar.

Now Jason had never been to a bar before but he learned right then and there that fifty six or so adult people way past their alcohol tolerance will take any chance they get to shout. "To the newlyweds!" They echoed, and then there was the sound of everybody gulping down as much liquor as they could, glasses being slammed down on the tables. He was pretty sure he heard a few shatter.

Percy leaned down to whisper in his ear, “Winner gets to give the first blowjob.”

Jason turned his head in surprise, his cock reacting to the filthy words. “Shouldn’t that be ‘gets to *receive* the first blowjob’?” He asked.

Percy chuckled, “Mmmmmm, you’d think, yeah? But,” He emphasized the *t,* running a finger up the length of Jason’s throat to lift his chin up so he could see him better. “I happen to really, really, *really* want to suck your cock, and I know I’m going to win this contest no matter what, so we’re gonna change the rules a little bit.” Jason groaned, shifting around a bit to try and get comfortable. He wasn’t hard, but he definitely wasn't flaccid either. Percy must have felt it because his smile turned shark-like and he licked a stripe up Jason’s throat. “We have a deal?” He murmured against his skin.

Did they have a deal? Oh yes. As much as he wanted Percy on his knees in front of him an even stronger urge to be the one kneeling over took him. Why? He didn’t know, he’d never sucked a dick before. Maybe it was the competitiveness in them both that was driving them. Honestly, who cared? “Deal.” He declared, reaching around him and picking up another shot.

Fourteen shots later and they were a giggling, touch happy mess. Axel was laughing at them, his broken nose whistling, as they tried to stay upright on the bar stool that Jason was balancing them both on. Coach Hedge was munching idly on the cardboard coasters while he supervised the drinking contest. “Come on Jackson, your turn for a shot. You’re both tied at fourteen to fourteen.”

Axel picked up the last shot and tried to hand it to Percy but Percy leaned too far to the side, clutching his stomach and laughing at some stupid joke Jason had told him. His weight was too much for Jason’s uncoordinated body to keep track of and they both tumbled off the

seat and onto the floor in a heap, Percy wheezing as he fought to catch his breath.

Axel howled with laughter, his motion to hand over the glass kept going though and he too fell off and landed on his ass next to them. Hedge sighed heavily, “It’s a tie then.”

“Think again! Huzzah!” Percy yelled, twirling his finger in the air. The vodka swirled up out of the glass and flew into his open mouth. He closed it and swallowed, throwing his hands up in the air. “I win.” He said smugly.

Axel stared at him wide-eyed, then stared at the empty glass he was holding. “How...how did you do that?” He asked in disbelief.

“Oh, my dad’s king of the oceans and I got a lil’ bit of his magic power when I was born. S’not a big deal.” Percy told him.

From his spot on the floor Jason could see Hedge spluttering above them, aghast that Percy would so freely reveal that to a mortal. He shouldn’t have worried.

Axel snorted, “Right, kid, and my mom’s Scarlett Johansson.”

Percy laughed, “Ahhh, you got me. I’ve actually been taking magic classes, s’all smoke and mirrors, really.”

Jason managed to haul himself into a standing position and lend a hand to Percy so he could get up too. Axel just shot to his feet expertly.

“I gotta go take a leak, be right back,” The biker said, making his way over to the bathrooms.

Nico and Will stepped out of a shadow right next to Coach and the poor satyr jumped about three feet in the air. “Hey, it’s my main man-er *goat* , Gleeson.” Nico was probably the only kid Coach would ever let get away with using his first name. “Ohhh, and Percy and Jason are here too, Will!” Nico leaned heavily on his boyfriend, taking a drink from a strange looking bottle that matched the ones him and Percy had. He passed it over to Will who also drank from it.

“Nico diAngelo, please tell me you are not shadow travelling while drunk! You could seriously hurt yourself. Will, how could you let him do that?” Hedge admonished them.

Will blinked slowly and handed something over to Coach Hedge. The satyr took it and turned it over. It was a little white oval, about the size of a- “Is this an *egg,* Solace?” He asked.

Will nodded and grinned, “Had to get out of there quick, s’only reason I let him, Coach. We had to come find you because...because…” He stopped and thought for a moment. “Hey babe, why’d we come for the coach?”

Nico giggled, actually *giggled* , and said, “We saw a mini golf course on the way over, it looks so *fun.* Will you please go play with us, Coach?”

Coach Hedge always seemed to have a hard time saying no to those two so Jason wasn’t surprised when he fidgeted for a moment before giving in. “Well...I do like mini golf. And who knows where the others have gotten off to by now.” He turned and gave Percy and Jason a glare, “You two are going to behave yourselves while I’m gone aren’t

you?”

Jason nodded enthusiastically and Percy went to mock salute him but misjudged the angle and hit himself in the eye. Will and Nico fell all over each other laughing and Coach’s lips twitched into a small smile. “Alright, alright. Just don’t go getting into any trouble. Stick close to Axel and *don’t* start any more fights.”

“You got it, boss.” Jason said. Coach rolled his eyes and hopped off the stool, heading for the exit.

Before Will and Nico followed him they crowded close to Percy and him. Will took something out of his pocket and pressed it into Jason’s hand. He looked down and found a sealed bottle of lube. Will put his hands on Jason’s shoulders and looked him in the eye. “Listen here, Jason. Sex is a wonderful thing, but you *must* be careful, otherwise you could seriously hurt your partner. All you have to do is-”

“Woah, woah, woah! Are...are you giving me the *Talk* right now?” He said, panicked for some reason.

The other blond nodded sagely. “I know you’ve probably had straight people sex,” He paused to make a face at that, “But this is a little different, okay? It takes time and preparation, now listen-”

Jason and Percy were subject to about a three minute lecture from Will on the mechanics of anal sex. It was less awkward than he thought it would be, Will used his professional doctor voice the whole time which made the whole thing a little more tolerable. What didn’t help was Nico standing next to him, watching Percy and his reactions to Will’s instructions and laughing randomly every now and then before taking another drink out of the grapevine bottle.

When his boyfriend was done talking Nico handed him the bottle and said, “Man, Jason am I glad you convinced me and Will to come along on this trip. I’m havin’ so much fun. I got to watch you get married, man, I-” He paused to sniffle and wipe his eyes with the back of his hand, “You’re a good friend, Jason. A *real good friend* , do you hear me? I know I don’t say it enough, but I’m so thankful you were with me when I met Cupid. I never thought things’d turn out like they did, but they...they *did,* ya know?”

Nico wasn’t making a whole lot of sense but Jason felt the sentiment either way. He nodded, “Yeah, Nico, I know.”

Percy cocked his head a bit. “When did you meet Cupid?”

Nico scoffed, “Not important, water boy. That’s in the past. What’s in the present is what matters. You got married tonight, Percy! Married! It was such a beautiful wedding too.” Nico pushed his hair back out of his face, “We gotta go, but hey-” He crooked a finger and Percy and Jason leaned down so he could whisper in their ears. “I got you something too.” Nico reached into the pocket of his jeans and pulled out two eggs, placing one in each of their hands. “You know what to do with these,” He said, winking conspiratorially before leaning back and walking off with Will right behind him.

Percy looked at his egg. “W-what are we supposed to do with these?”

Jason shrugged, “I dunno.”

“BOO!” A pair of hands landed on his shoulders from behind and Jason jumped, turning around so quickly he almost lost his egg and lube. Thalia grinned at him. “Hey, little brother. I’m about to take off and join back up with Hunters before they get too far away. Wanted to come and say bye before I left.” She wrapped him up in a quick hug and pulled away, her eyes suspiciously wet. “You know, Jason, I never

thought I'd get to see your wedding day." She grabbed Percy by the shirt collar and pulled him in close for a hug as well. "You were there for me when I came out of that tree all those years ago, Percy. No one else even wanted to *touch* me, but you...you helped me stand, get back on my feet in more ways than one. And-and now you married my little brother, and I couldn't be more happy. You two looked so cute together up on that altar, I'll never forget it. I can't wait to tell Annabeth all about it, she's gonna be so sad she wasn't here." She let out a huff of breath and sniffled, straightening her jacket.

"Hey, uh, maybe *don't* tell her before I get a chance to, Thalia." Percy said, rubbing the back of his neck. "This is something I think I should be the one to tell her about. She might not take it as well as you think she will."

Thalia rolled her eyes, "Alright, I won't. Okay, I gotta get going now. Love you guys, be safe and don't drive drunk." She kissed each of their cheeks and said, "Oh by the way the bartender told me to give this to you. You forgot your receipt at the counter." She held up a piece of paper and they both reached for it at the same time. Percy laughed and let it go so Jason could stuff it in his pocket. "Tell Axel I said bye, and that I hope things with his daughter turn out okay." Then she was gone, disappearing into the crowd as quickly as she had appeared.

"Hey, hey! Was that your badass little sister I just saw, Jason?" The biker said, finally making it back to their table.

"Yeah, she had to go though, she sends her regards and wants you to know she hopes you work things out with your daughter." Jason passed along her message, not bothering to correct Axel's assumption that he was the elder sibling. Thalia still looked like she was fifteen, after all.

Axel pounded his fist against his chest, leather jacket creaking. "She's a good one, she is. Got a heart o' gold. Reminds me of my little one...Now, who's ready for more fun, eh?" He said with a twinkle in

his eye. “You thinkin’ what I’m thinkin’?”

Percy grinned, “Bar fight?”

“Bar fight.” Axel agreed.

Jason slipped the bottle of lube into his pocket and hefted his egg. “Hey, Percy. I think I know what we’re supposed to do with these eggs now.” Percy’s grin turned mischievous and as one they both turned and threw their eggs at the biggest, meanest looking guy in the bar. Well, the second because Axel was definitely the first.

The eggs landed dead center on the back of some random guy’s head, the yolks dripping down under the collar of his shirt. He froze, then slowly stood up and stomped over to them, his fists clenched and murder in his eyes. “Did you two shitheads ju-”

Axel sucker punched the guy and yelled, “BAR FIGHT!”

The room erupted in chaos.

-Back To The Present-Marriott Hotel-

Percy’s POV

Percy blinked as his sight came back to him. He heard Jason groan next to him and turned his head to see him stirring too. Jason opened his eyes and they stared at each other.

“Well…at least we finally saw Thalia.” Jason said, breaking the silence.

Percy huffed, “She seemed happy for us.”

Jason hummed, his eyes momentarily flicking down to land on his throat. Percy felt a blush rise up and he knew Jason was thinking about the nuzzling they’d done in the bar. If Percy was being honest, he’d been surprised when he had felt Jason’s face press into his neck. He hadn’t expected it but as soon as he realized what he was doing, Percy’s immediate instinct had been to reciprocate.

He swallowed and watched the way Jason’s eyes tracked the bob of his Adam's apple. Percy’s mouth opened and he said the first thing that came to his mind. “Do you think I ever gave you that blowjob I owed you?”

Jason’s eyes got wide and he went to say something but Leo strutted in and said, “You two lazing around? C’mon, get up, it’s check out time and-hey are you guys okay?” He must’ve taken in the way they were slumped against the foot of the bed.

Jason scrubbed his face and stood up, “Yeah, man we just…got another memory back.”

Leo looked immediately interested and called over his shoulder as Jason was helping Percy stand up, “Hey guys, Jason and Percy remembered something!”

The first person Percy locked eyes with was Will, and he thought about the memory he’d just had of them standing in the middle of a macho biker bar while Will lectured them on safe sex. *And remember, use* one *finger first otherwise-*

Percy shook his head to dislodge Will's voice from last night. He looked back up and the real Will was grinning at him, like he knew what had just gone through his mind. Percy averted his eyes and Nico laughed quietly at him.

Hedge shoved his way to the front and saw the receipt Jason was holding. "Ah, remembered Rodrigo's did you? You heed my advice and behave yourselves after I left?"

Percy bit his lip and locked eyes with Jason. No doubt they were both thinking of the bar fight. "Yeeessss…"

Hedge snorted, "Don't think you can pull the wool over my eyes. Axel told me all about it. Who do you think gave him your new room number when he showed up last night?" He rolled his eyes.

Percy winced, "Sorry, Coach, just didn't want you to worry."

"Wait, what happened at Rodrigo's?" Frank asked.

"Nothin' like a post-wedding bar fight, ain't that right, kids?" Coach Hedge said.

"What! You guys got in a *bar fight?* " Leo sighed, "All Frank, Grover, and I did was crash a golf cart into the Luxor."

Chapter End Notes

I decided to make a tumblr with the same name and icon picture as my ao3 account if anybody wants to chat or ask questions, or even yell at me about my fics feel free to visit me there

Guido

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’m sorry, we did *what?* ” Grover asked, turning to look at Leo.

Leo blinked and tilted his head like he was thinking, “We...drove a golf cart into the Luxor. I just...remembered that. We also…” He frowned and tugged on his hair, irritated. “Ugh, nope that’s all I got for now. Frank, do you remember anything about it?”

Frank appeared very alarmed, his eyes wide. “No, I definitely would have mentioned that if I did. Where did we even *get* a golf cart at?”

“Hey, don’t look at us. Just because we went mini golfing doesn’t mean we supplied you with a golf cart to vandalize.” Nico said when everyone turned to look at him and Will.

“We never saw you at the golf course, so wherever you got the cart it wasn’t from there.” Coach Hedge said.

Grover sighed and rubbed his bald head absently. Percy really couldn’t take him seriously looking like that. “Hopefully we figure it out soon. For now let's try to get out of here before we discover anything else that happened last night.”

“I agree,” Frank muttered.

Jason wordlessly picked his suitcase back up and gathered up a few of the scattered things they’d deemed worthy of keeping. Percy watched

the strong muscles in his arm flexing as he worked, so like they had this morning when Jason had leaned over him in the shower and caged him in. His gaze travelled down the length of his body, picturing the way it had looked completely nude and drenched in water droplets. *Stop it,* Percy told himself.

Someone said something to him but he was too distracted to hear it properly. He turned his head towards the sound. “What? Sorry I wasn’t listen...ing…” There was no one behind him where the sound had come from. Just the wall and the closed door to the bathroom.

He turned back around to find everyone looking at him worriedly.

“Everything alright, man?” Grover asked.

Percy shook his head to clear his thoughts, “Uh, yeah sorry. Probably just imagining-”

Hey, can you hear me out there?

He whipped back around, searching frantically. He definitely hadn’t imagined that.

“Percy, are you-” Jason started but he held a finger up for silence and he stopped.

“Shhh, there’s someone-”

Don’t forget about me, Lord! You promised you’d come back.

“Hello? Where are you?” The way they called him ‘lord’ was sending off red flags like crazy. Not bad red flags, but familiar ones. He knew there wasn’t a horse in here, that would be ridiculous, but what was it?

Leo was looking at him like he’d grown two heads. “Are you still drunk?”

A faint *tap tap tap* came from the direction of the bathroom. Jason groaned, “Please tell me there’s not another biker in our bathroom.”

In here, Lord.

Hedge snorted, “I hope not, place was flooded last night.”

A light came on in his mind. A sea creature. It had to be, why else would it be in the waterlogged bathroom? Percy brushed off the random thought that maybe he’d flooded the bathroom on purpose for the specific reason of keeping a creature in there. He probably wouldn’t have done that.

Percy reached out with his mind and encountered another presence. Whatever it was had to be small, it’s consciousness barely a flicker on his radar. It sent off waves of distress. “It’s alright, I’m coming don’t worry.” He passed the pineapple he was still holding over to Jason and walked to the bathroom door.

“Be careful, Percy, it could be dangerous.” Frank warned.

The little creature behind the door bristled at Frank's accusation. *Dangerous? I'll show him dangerous! I'll pinch you…you…whoever you are!*

Percy snorted, suddenly getting an idea about what was in there. "I'll be fine, Frank." he opened the door and stepped into the bathroom. Hedge mentioned the sink had exploded but Percy thought he was honestly exaggerating that. The faucet was gone, sure, but the porcelain was still intact. The bath mats were soaking wet and it was almost pitch black in there. He walked over to the sink and reached into the water that filled the bowl. His hand encountered something hard and cold. He picked it up and went back into the other room.

"Is that a…lobster?" Leo asked.

"Yeah, he was in the sink." Percy lifted him up so they were eye to eye. The lobsters beady little black ones seemed to stare right through him. "Hey, little guy. Where'd we pick you up at?"

The lobster's antennae twitched slowly and his little hind legs kicked instinctively. He reached out to him with his mind again but his consciousness was sluggish, like he was on the verge of sleep.

Wood…sharp metal…saved me, Lord. You and your mate…Guido's tired now…

His mental connection to the lobster dimmed and he assumed he'd drifted off. Percy glanced over at Jason. *You and your mate* .

"He says we saved him."

Jason scrubbed his face and sighed. “Of course we did. What else did he say?”

“He, uh, fell asleep after that.”

Leo reached over and rubbed his finger on the lobsters’ head. His pinchers flexed in his sleep and Leo snatched his hand back. Percy resisted the urge to laugh. “So what are you going to do with him?” Leo asked. “Leave him here?”

Percy protectively cradled Guido against his chest, aghast. “ *Leave him?* No, he’s coming with me.” He picked up his suitcase. “I’ll put him back in the ocean when we get back to camp.” The mention of camp brought about an air of gloom and reluctance. He knew he wasn’t the only one who felt it because he saw Jason wince out of the corner of his eye.

Grover nodded, pleased with the plan to release Guido. “Now that’s settled, the rest of us can grab our bags and we can get out of here.”

Hiding Guido in the hallways was easier than he thought it would be. He rested the lobster on the top of his suitcase and his dark carapace blended in smoothly with the color of the luggage. It only took a few minutes for the others to get their bags out of their respective rooms and soon they were heading into the lobby. Grover checked them out at the reception desk quickly and they made their way towards the door. As they past the last employee at the desk Percy heard him say into the phone;

“No, m’am, I’m sorry, he just checked out. Yes, I understand that, m’am, but-...mmmhm, mmmhm...There’s really nothing I can do-oh! Hold please!” He clicked a button and waved to get their group’s attention. “Excuse me! Hi, so sorry to bother you, but are you the Underwood Party?”

Grover maneuvered his way to the front of the group. “Yes...that’s us. What can we do for you?” He adjusted his ball cap nervously.

The receptionist visibly relaxed. “Oh, good, I was worried I’d missed you. There’s a very...stubborn woman...on the phone for a Percy Jackson. I sent the call up to his room but you’d already left. I’m sorry, it’s usually hotel policy to deny calls like this but the woman had another with her who is very...persuasive.”

Percy partially raised his hand while his stomach sank through his body with unease. “I’m Percy Jackson. Did they say who they were?” Beside him Jason radiated stress.

The man nodded, “Said their names were Annabeth Chase and Piper McLean.”

Chapter End Notes

> Almost done moving into my new place. Bear with the short chapters for a little longer, I promise they'll get better

Marriage Bonding

Jason gripped his wrist. He felt the eyes of their friends on them. Percy wasn't sure what to do, honestly. His girlfriend was calling his hotel asking to talk to him, and she apparently had Piper with her. Both of those girls were extremely smart and had amazing intuition and Percy knew right off the bat that they sensed something was wrong. Why else would they both be calling?

"Percy," Jason whispered next to him, "They know."

"How could they?" He whispered back, "It's probably nothing, they're just checking up on us." It sounded like he was trying to convince himself of that as much as he was trying to reassure Jason.

The look Jason gave him clearly said he didn't believe that for one second. The receptionist politely waited for a response but his grip on the phone was white knuckled, like he sensed the tense atmosphere. Will and Nico busied themselves with admiring a potted plant in the corner while the others suddenly acted like they couldn't see Percy and Jason's interaction with the receptionist.

"Uh, sir, what should I tell your...girlfriend?" He asked, raising the phone up a bit.

Automatically Percy corrected him, he didn't know why. "She's not my girlfriend, I'm married."

"I'm his husband." Jason added.

The poor receptionist had the expression similar to what someone

witnessing a train wreck or other such disaster unfolding before him would have. Percy didn't blame him. To be fair Annabeth *is* his girlfriend and Jason *is* technically his husband. He felt a wave of shame pour over him for denying his and Annabeth's relationship to this random guy. Why did he do that? Fuck. All their friends were there too. To the left of them he saw Will and Nico giving him strange looks, but when they noticed him they turned back around to be fascinated by the fake plant again.

"O...kay…" The receptionist said slowly. Percy noticed his name tag read *Tahir*

Percy closed his eyes, "Tell them we're already gone. You didn't see us."

"Percy, are you sure-"

"Do *you* want to talk to them, Jason?" Jason closed his mouth and averted his eyes. "Yeah, didn't think so."

Tahir pursed his lips and raised his eyebrows, and Percy was half convinced he was about to rat them out to the girls, but instead he just gave them a smile and unmuted the phone. "I'm sorry, Miss Chase, Mr. Jackson just left, I wasn't able to catch him. Oh, the other one? No, Mr. Grace was with him. My apologies, m'am, but-"

He heard the distinct sound of Annabeth's distant voice coming through the receiver, but it was too far away for him to hear. She sounded mad. Jason slid a twenty dollar bill across the counter and mouthed *I'm sorry* at him. Tahir picked it up and slipped it into his pocket.

"Mhmm, I understand you need to speak with him, but it's just not

possible. Oh, look, they've just gotten into a cab and driven off. I-"

The voice on the other end changed and he recognized it as Piper. Her tone was much calmer but more firm. Percy had about one second to pray that Charmspeak didn't work over telephone lines before Tahir held the receiver away from his ear with an unpleasant grimace on his face.

"That's really not necessary, Miss McLean. You-" The sound of the voice changed and Percy assumed Annabeth had taken the phone back. Tahir's patient sigh was more visible than it was audible. "Hello, Miss Chase."

Again she sounded distant but this time at the end he heard her say;

"-speak to Grover Underwood!"

Grover bleeted nervously behind him. If Tahir found that odd he didn't say anything. The guy worked in a Vegas hotel, he'd probably seen weirder things. Tahir covered the speaker with his hand and raised an eyebrow at Grover.

Grover looked at Percy with wide eyes. He shrugged helplessly at the satyr. If Grover wanted to talk to Annabeth he wouldn't stop him. Grover shook his head at Tahir and Percy was pretty sure he just saw a small bit of the receptionist's soul leave his body as his eyes fluttered shut and he brought the phone back up to his ear. "Mr. Underwood has also departed, m'am, he is unavailable as well." She replied and Tahir nodded, once again covering the speaker with his hand. He looked past him and Jason and said, "Mr. di Angelo? Have you already left too?"

Nico turned and put a hand to his chest. "Me? She wants to talk to

me?" Tahir nodded and the smile Nico pulled promised bad things for them. He walked over to the desk and held his hand out for the phone.

Jason paled considerably and put a hand on Nico's shoulder. "Nico, please-"

Nico rolled his eyes, "Calm down, Jason. You act like I'm signing your death warrant." Jason opened his mouth but Nico took his hand off the speaker and brought the phone up to his ear. "Annabeth? Yeah it's me." He listened to her talk for a few seconds. "Oh, they're fine, don't worry. This morning they were really *enthusiastic* to get back to cam- *home.* How'd it go last night? What did we do?" Percy bit his lip as Nico peeked over his shoulder at them. "Everything went great. Really fun actually. You won't *believe* what Percy and Jaso-what? Oh, go ahead, sorry." He paused as she spoke, turning slightly so he could see their group. His eyebrows crept up his forehead in disbelief as she talked. "O-oh, really? Yeah, just...hang on a minute." Nico put his hand over the speaker and buried his face in his elbow. Percy was confused until he saw his shoulders shaking and a small laugh escape from him. Nico snickered and laughed for a few seconds before huffing to catch his breath and speak again. "Annabeth, are you serious? Oh my-you're really not kidding? Yeah, no, nothing out of the ordinary happened last night. Went about how you'd expect it to, actually. I'll make sure to tell them. Anything Piper wants to pass on?" Annabeth warbled something else through the phone and Nico's lips twitched. "You got it. Alright, I gotta get going now. Yeah, yeah, we'll be home in a few days. Mhmmm, bye." He handed the receiver back to Tahir who promptly set it on its cradle.

Nico grabbed his luggage handle and started for the door, Will catching up to him quickly.

"Hey!" Nico turned back to look at Jason after he called out to him. "W-what did they say?"

Nico bliniked innocently at him. “Nothing important. They wanted me to tell you both to get home quickly. Sounded pretty urgent, not really sure why.” With that he continued out of the hotel.

Percy knew they’d get nothing else out of him. Nico was stubborn like that. All he could do was be grateful he didn’t tell them about what happened. He saw Will lean down so Nico could whisper in his ear furiously. Will bit his knuckles and the corner of his eyes crinkled up as he resisted the urge to laugh. His eyes flicked back to Percy and Jason before landing on Nico again. Jason grit his teeth beside him and released his wrist he forgot was being held.

Leo passed them on the way out the door and gave them a sympathetic smile.

“Thanks, Tahir, sorry about all that.” Percy said.

Tahir shrugged, “It’s quite alright, I’m happy to be of assistance. I hope you gentlemen have a lovely day.” He replied before busying himself on his computer as if he didn’t just witness that awkward situation unfold.

“You too,” Jason told him.

They brought up the rear end of their group as they left, but stopped when Tahir called out to them. “Yes?” Percy asked.

Tahir studied them with his warm brown eyes for a moment before saying, “Vegas is a town that brings out the best and worst of us all. People find love here, but they also experience heartbreak. I know a spontaneous Vegas wedding when I see one. Hundreds walk through that door every week and about three quarters of them don’t last anymore than a month. You two seem different. I think you might be

part of the one quarter that sticks with it. If that's the case then I suggest you break it off with those girlfriends of yours soon. They're worried about you. I'm...not trying to admonish you or make you feel bad. I'm not one to stand in the way of true love. We talked last night when you both came back here, I'm not sure if you remember or not. You've got a connection, I could see that even from just a few minutes around you. Whatever you were before this...best friends, colleagues, acquaintances...doesn't really matter now, but...well, never mind. I hope everything works out for you. Also, your lobster is sliding off your luggage."

Alarmed, Percy turned and managed to catch Guido before he fell. He settled him in a more secure position. "Thank you, Tahir. We, uh...appreciate it?" He said.

Tahir ignored them and waved his hand, clearly dismissing them.

Outside on the pavement Will was busy flagging down a taxi. They huddled around him while they waited. Coach Hedge nudged him with his elbow and Percy looked down. "That wasn't the smartest move back there, kid. Those two girls know something is up, and they want answers. You sure you should've brushed off that phone call like that?"

Jason answered for him. "We decided it would be better to tell them in person."

Hedge clicked his tongue and adjusted his shirt. "Your call. I just-"

"We meet again, boys!" A voice cut Coach Hedge off. A small group of six girls walked up to them, all wearing loose grey clothing. The one that spoke was holding a large clothing bag that was zipped up. The girls all had the exact same green themed make-up, elaborate hairstyles and sparkly green high heels. "I was hoping we'd see you

before you left, but Vegas is a big place, we didn't have a lot of confidence. I'm glad we found you though, we're just about off to work."

Something about the way these girls looked rang a familiar bell in his head. Jason's forehead crinkled like he also recognized them but couldn't quite picture where from. Suddenly, it dawned on Percy. "You're showgirls!"

The girl who had first spoken giggled and said, "Yep. Can't believe you forgot us all so quickly. Especially you," She directed at Jason, throwing him a wink. He flushed red and tried not to look awkward.

"Sorry, we had a bit of a crazy night," Percy explained, "But I think I have something of yours." He pulled his luggage around to the font of him and handed Guido to Jason while he unzipped it. He stuck his hand inside and felt around until he encountered the cold slippery fabric and withdrew it. Percy handed the green leotard over to the showgirl. "I, uh, found that in my room this morning. It matches your makeup and shoes so I thought…"

She held it up and turned it over, probably inspecting it for rips and tears. "Yep, this is mine." She gave him a wry smile, "But it looked much better on you. Really compliments your eyes."

Percy stumbled back a few steps and bumped into Frank who was fighting hard not to laugh. "I-I'm sorry?"

The showgirl giggled again and put a hand to her mouth. "That's alright, I did need it back, so thank you for returning it unharmed. Here, we brought your outfits we traded for last night." The girl holding the garment bag passed it over to Percy who took it because he didn't know what else to do. It was surprisingly heavy. He was still reeling from the fact that he'd apparently worn a leotard at some

point last night. “We really do have to be off now, but if you ever want to hang out again, look us up.” They strolled by, headed for one of the casinos on the strip.

Jason’s hand shot out and he tapped on the lead girl's shoulder who stopped and looked at him quizzically. Jason quickly glanced around at the curious faces of their friends and leaned in so only Percy and her could hear him. “Hey, we...we didn’t have, you know... *sex* , last night, did we?”

She snorted, “No, we didn’t. You paid me to take my clothes off, but only because your husband wanted my outfit. There was a little misunderstanding at first, but we worked it out in the end. Sorry about your face though.” She patted his cheek and continued on after her coworkers.

“My...face?” He said, bringing up a hand to feel it. “What’s wrong with my face?” He asked Percy.

His brain took a minute to catch up with everything so by the time he answered, a taxi was pulling up next to them. “Uh, nothing that I can see. Maybe a little red, but that’s it.”

“Hey, come on, guys! Taxi is here!” Will called out. They had no choice but to climb in.

It was one of those van taxis that held a lot of people, and Percy ended up in the back seat next to Jason. Guido and the pineapple sat on top of their luggage and the garment bag that was on the third spot on their bench seat. The cabbie had been wary of letting Guido onboard, but in the end they’d convinced him he wouldn’t cause any damages.

Percy had no idea where they'd parked Festus, but Leo apparently did. He gave the cabbie a set of coordinates and he punched it into GPS and they took off. They wove through Las Vegas traffic and were soon on their way out of town, driving down a two lane desert road. They spent the ride in silence. Percy tried not to think about how warm Jason's thigh was as it rested against his.

A loud rumble roared up and the cabbie instinctively pulled as close to the white line on the outside of the road as he could. An enormous black Harley swerved around them. Percy half expected it to be Axel, but the guy on the bike was a lot shorter and had straight grey hair that streamed out from the back of his helmet. The biker glanced over at them, looking bored as he passed them but then he did a double take when he saw Percy and Jason in the back. He slowed down so they travelled side by side on the road. That couldn't be safe or legal. Percy saw the cabbie tense up and keep his head looking straight.

The biker grinned at them and pounded his fist to his leather-clad chest then flashed them the 'rock-on' hand symbol while he stuck his tongue out like he was a member of Kiss. Bewildered, and because the biker obviously expected a response, Percy weakly flashed him the 'rock on' symbol, Jason copying him a second later. The biker raised his fist in the air and whooped, speeding off ahead of them, weaving around cars that respectfully made room for him. Right before he pulled in front of a red sedan, Percy saw the back of his leather jacket was decorated with a large fabric patch. It was a scene of a Harley driving through a cactus and tumbleweed strewn desert. Large letters declared *Desert Riders. Hardy, Mean, Ruthless.* He zipped out of view.

The cabbie's wide eyes found them in the rearview mirror, but he didn't say anything, just tightened his hold on the wheel and increased his speed a bit.

Jason leaned over and said in his ear, "I think we joined that biker gang." His warm breath brushed against his neck.

Leo snorted in the seat in front of them. “You think?”

Percy settled a little further down in his seat and thunked his head against the window, watching the cars fly by. Jason got more comfortable too and leaned his head back against the headrest, his thigh an ever present reminder of how warm his body was.

There wasn’t much to do while they drove so Percy took the time to think over what he knew so far. Or at least he tried to, but his mind kept wandering back to the man next to him. What the receptionist had said to them floated back to him. *You’ve got a connection, I could see that even from just a few minutes around you.* Thalia’s voice followed Tahir’s. *I couldn't be more happy. You two looked so cute together up on that altar, I’ll never forget it.*

A connection? Looked cute together? Percy wished his memories would come back faster. Everyone seemed to think it wasn’t that odd that he and Jason decided to get married, but *why?* Sure they hung out a lot, did duo quests a lot, sparred a lot. But that was only because they’d become such good friends over the years. They’d often sleep over at each other’s dorm rooms in New Rome to do homework together. Percy would help Jason with his science classes and in return Jason would help him understand the confusing mix of numbers and letters that made up math and were hell on his dyslexia. Annabeth and Piper were great friends so it wasn’t that strange that he and Jason had grown so close.

He could admit that it wasn’t just because their girlfriends hung out that they did too. He just genuinely *liked* Jason. He was a great guy, strong and confident, but pushed into being a reluctant leader like Percy had been. Jason had a way with people that drew you in and you had to actually work hard in order to hate him, not that Percy had ever tried. He was raised as a Roman warrior, but there was so much more to him than that. His kindness and gentleness and just pure goodheartedness always took Percy by surprise. Percy saw a lot of himself in Jason but he also saw the qualities he’d always wanted to have but lacked. He was hesitant to call him his best friend because Grover still very much occupied that role, but if there was a chance to

be around Jason, he would take it.

That didn't mean he liked him romantically and wanted to fuck him though. Percy bit his lip as Jason's thigh moved against him fractionally, the motion comforting and soothing. Okay, so what? Liking human contact was normal, it didn't mean anything.

His brain unhelpfully suggested that liking human contact from a friend and letting that friend get on his knees to suck your dick in the shower were two very different things. Maybe he should think about this a little more.

The memory of the slick slide of wet skin on skin from earlier pushed its way to the front of his mind. The way the water had caressed their bodies as they pressed close and explored each other had been delightful. His body still felt the aftereffects of the sex they had while drunk, but now he had a clear memory of what they'd allowed themselves to do in the shower. The image of Jason's heavy lidded eyes looking up at him flashed across his vision and he felt his cock twitch in his pants. The silky slide of Jason's tongue as it swiped vodka off his lips in Rodrigo's bar followed it, along with the eager way Percy had leaned over and whispered his desires in his ear.

He bit his tongue to try and chase the feeling away. His dick certainly liked Jason enough. *Fucking traitor,* He told it mentally.

He tried to change the direction of his thoughts but he kept finding himself down the same path. Maybe he did like his friend. His heart had enjoyed the intimate moment they had this morning, but he was starting to think that it might not have been his heart, but just *him* in general.

Percy took a discrete deep breath and let himself go through the sex they shared after they'd woken up. The way his heart had pounded in

his chest, the slight ache from the bruises, the feel of the cool tiles at his back, the movement of Jason's mouth on him, the anticipation and arousal that had come from Jason's finger entering his body. He dwelled on that last part, the strange but good experience of being penetrated there.

Too late he realized his sight had begun to dim as a lost memory returned to him. He felt Jason freeze beside him, a tell tale sign that he was being pulled along as well.

-Flashback-Mariott Hotel-Early Hours In The Morning-

Percy's POV

Percy stopped outside their new room door, Jason breathing hard behind him, hands wandering and touching where they pleased. The taste of him lingered on his tongue.

"We do this and there's no going back, Percy." Jason panted into his shoulder.

He leaned his head back and let Jason kiss up his neck and bury his face there. "Mmmm, good, I don't want to lose you."

"We'll be married forever, you'll be *stuck* with me forever." Jason nipped at his skin and Percy turned in his arms, capturing his lips in a slow kiss.

He pulled back to look at him, Jason's face cradled in his hands. "I want that. Do you? Want to be with me forever, too?"

Jason kissed him again and reached behind him to swipe their key card in the lock. The door swung open and Percy found himself being walked backwards. He laughed and broke the kiss to pull their luggage inside, along with the pineapple and matching knives resting on top of Jason's suitcase and the leotard draped over his. He shut the door once they were both inside. He tossed the pineapple onto the nearby coffee table and left the luggage where it was next to the bed. Percy leaned up on his tiptoes to kiss his husband again.

Jason turned their kiss into a hug, once again burying his face into Percy's neck. He hummed contently and ran his fingers through his soft blond hair. "I do." Jason mumbled into his skin.

His husband brought his face back up. Percy shoved him backwards and pulled his own shirt off over his head and tossed it over the coat rack. Jason was surprised until he saw Percy half naked in front of him. He copied him and his shirt landed somewhere else in the room. Jason took a step forward and Percy met him in the middle. They sized each other up, eyes roaming.

Percy had never seen someone more beautiful, he thought at that moment. The moment before two lives became one. They were married, but marriage could be dissolved. Unless they did what they were about to do. Hera's warning had been clear: have sex and the marriage bond settles permanently. Percy honestly couldn't wait.

The light from the casinos outside cast shadows across Jason's face, giving him a slightly feral, hungry look about him. It tugged at something deep inside him, something that recognized danger and wanted more of it. He groaned and Jason moved, picking him up and continuing on in the direction he was headed, their eyes locked. Percy threw his legs around his waist, straddling him. His foot knocked over a lamp but he couldn't care less. Percy felt a hard surface beneath him as Jason set him down on the high coffee table. He pushed and the table nestled up against the wall. He was proud of the pineapple for staying upright.

“So what now?” Percy asked, strangely calm.

Jason ground their bodies together and Percy felt his erection rub up against him. He tilted his head back as Jason did it again, his lips finding their way to his collarbone, sucking gently at it. “We have sex.”

“Mmmm,” Percy looped his finger through Jason’s belt loop and used it to connect them again. Jason’s tongue ran across his skin and his breath hitched, the warm slide derailing his brain for a second. “Y-yeah, but how?”

Jason giggled, “Were you not listening when Will gave us the sex ed lecture?” His voice took on a horrible southern accent, “You start with one finger and work your way inside, makin’ sure to go slow so yer pardner doesn’t-”

Percy put a finger to his lips to silence him while he laughed at Jason’s awful impression of Will. “I heard him, silly. I meant which one of us is going to bottom and which is going to- *ah!”* Jason surprised him by sucking his finger into his mouth. He took it back.

Jason smirked, “What do you want to do?” He thrust forwards again, resting his head on Percy’s shoulder as he slowly rocked against him.

“I-” He sucked in a breath as Jason’s hand popped open the button on his jeans, the handcuffs jangling, and reached inside to pull out his hard cock. He stroked it in time with his thrusts. “Oh-ungh, I, uh- *fuck* , I don’t care, I don’t care, just fuck me, *please.”* The hand on him paused and he whined, but then strong arms were lifting him again and he was being settled onto a large fluffy bed. Jason kissed down his body, making a detour to lick and suck at his nipples before trailing down his abs to his waist. His fingers dipped under his jeans and slid them off. Percy lifted his hips so it was easier for him, but

Jason got distracted by that and started sucking at the sensitive flesh there. “ *Jason, please.”*

His pants finally made it all the way off. He wondered briefly where his shoes and socks had gone but then Jason was undoing his own pants and all of Percy’s attention focused on watching him undress. He followed the thin trail of golden hair down his body where it disappeared into his tented boxers and he caught himself licking his lips as he remembered the weight of Jason’s cock on them as it entered his mouth.

Jason growled and Percy’s underwear followed his pants. Feeling useless, he sat up and helped Jason divest of his own boxers, pressing his lips to the hot tip of his dick as it lifted up after being free of it’s fabric prison. Fingers wove into his hair and he thought they were about to have a repeat of a few minutes ago, but then the fingers left and he was being pushed back down, Jason settling between his open legs.

They kissed again, nothing between them but skin and bead necklaces, which clicked together, the sound oddly satisfying in it’s own right. Jason’s heavy dick rested against him, hard and searing hot and silky smooth at the same time and Percy thought he must be slowly losing his mind because there’s no way someone could feel all those sensations at once. Jason’s tongue ran across his bottom lip and Percy poked his out to meet it, their kiss deepening as Jason’s body pressed against him.

Percy came up for air, a thought running through his head. “Shit.”

“What?” Jason asked, catching his breath.

“We left the lube Will gave us in our old room.” He’d never had gay penetrative sex before but he was certain it didn’t really work without

some form of lubrication.

Jason looked like he was seriously contemplating going back for it when his eyes landed on something to the left of Percy's head. His hand reached over and he heard the sound of tearing plastic. He didn't bother to see what it was because right then their erections brushed together and his eyes fluttered closed.

"Well, that's convenient. Thanks, Tahir, you're a real pal." Percy opened his eyes to find Jason holding a bottle of lube. He handed it to him and then his arm was moving again as he dropped the gift basket off the side of the bed.

Jason took the bottle back, setting it next to them on the blanket. Percy raised an eyebrow at him and Jason suddenly looked shy, averting his eyes. "I...want to try something. Do you trust me?"

It was such a sweet, innocent gesture that Percy felt his heart skip a beat. He reached up and turned Jason's face back to him. "Of course I trust you. With my life." He whispered up to him.

Jason swallowed hard, his eyes illuminated by the lights from outside. "Okay. Okay." Then he was drawing away and off of him and Percy was confused, trying to figure out what he'd done wrong. Jason lifted one of his legs and slipped out from between them, in the same motion his hand slid up his thigh and then he was being turned around so his chest was laying on the blanket.

"What-" Jason's hands found his hips and he gently pulled them back, raising his butt in the air and suddenly Percy had an idea about what Jason wanted to do. He bit his lip and tried his best not to feel exposed, but it was difficult with the vulnerable position he was in. He knew now why Jason had asked if he trusted him first. He couldn't see anything happening behind him, and that would usually set his nerves

on edge but he knew it was Jason back there, so instead of unease he felt only a shy anticipation. A soft hand smoothed over the curve of his ass and a thumb dipped into his crack to spread his cheeks. He felt his ears burning as his legs instinctively shuffled apart to make it easier for Jason to...do what he was about to do. Jason could see literally all of him, nothing was hidden now.

Jason groaned above and behind him. The bed dipped and he assumed he was getting into position but Percy couldn't bring himself to look between his legs and confirm it. He didn't really have to because a second later warm breath ghosted across skin that had never experienced that before. His breath sped up and he raised his hips a fraction, seeking contact. Gods, why was he acting this way? Shamelessly presenting himself for the man behind him and-

A hot, wet *something* poked inquisitively at his hole and all his previous thoughts fell out of his head. Jason's tongue came back more firmly this time, swiping across his asshole. A shiver ran it's way up his spine and he buried his face in the blankets as Jason took his time exploring him, making little satisfied noises and moaning occasionally. He soon had Percy panting hard, pushing his hips back, trying to get more stimulation, his cock hanging heavy and leaking precum. Who knew this would feel so *good?*

That talented tongue circled his ring of muscle before pressing into the center of it. Percy made a high pitched noise in the back of his throat, clenching his hands into the pillowcases as he forced himself to relax and accept the intrusion. Jason pulled back before he ever really got in and he kissed him directly on his hole before his tongue reappeared to worm its way inside of his body finally, his hands gripping the flesh of his ass hard.

Percy whined again as Jason started to fuck him with his mouth, the sensation intense and brand new. Jason thrust in and out, randomly kissing and sucking before pushing his way back in to work him open. Percy's cock strained against his belly, asking for friction anyway it could get it. His brain caught up with him and he realized he was mumbling incoherently. "Oh, fuck, yes right there, please, *please* ,

don’t-ughn *don’t stop* . Jason, *ohhhh Jason,* oh my gods, oh holy *shit-”* One of his hands had found its way back there to help hold himself open. Now it made its way underneath him, grabbing hold of his dick, the pressure a blissful relief as he started to stroke himself. He might not make it much longer, not with how eager and persistent Jason was eating him out. Did they still call it that even when it was two guys? He honestly didn’t care.

Jason chuckled against him and the warmth from his body disappeared, along with his sinful mouth. Percy grunted in frustration as he was turned once again back around, his back flat on the bed. His hand fell away and he just lay there, acutely feeling the loss of stimulation. Jason looked down at him in wonder, chest heaving, lips shiny with saliva. He wiped the back of his hand across his mouth and picked up the bottle of lube.

All the frustration he had now fled and was replaced by excitement. It was nearly time. Jason took the plastic seal off the lid and uncapped it. They shared a tense moment of eye contact and Percy realized he was waiting for his permission. He cleared his throat and said in a low, needy voice, “ *Yes.* ” He nodded just to emphasize the fact, his hair spreading out across the pillow under him.

Jason wordlessly squeezed some out in his hand and Percy parted his legs, raising his knees up for a better angle for him. He reached down and lazily stroked his cock while Jason slicked up his fingers. He saw Jason’s breath stutter when his blue eyes landed on him and saw him already spread and waiting. He laid down between his legs and kissed the inside of his quivering thighs. He felt a cold finger press up against him and he tipped his head back, breath coming fast and short, both hands fisting the blanket.

“It’s okay,” Jason murmured reassuringly against the base of his thigh. “Just relax, love. If it’s too much, tell me and I’ll back off. We won’t go any farther than you’re comfortable with.”

Percy nodded, unable to speak. He wasn't scared, per se, he just didn't know what to expect. A finger was a lot longer than a tongue and a dick was definitely longer and wider than both. Jason's tongue had been a bit of a tight fit and he was secretly worried his dick simply wouldn't fit. The finger pushed a little harder and he made his body relax again. He was surprised when it slipped in easily and almost painlessly, the oral must have loosened him up more than he thought. He felt the point where it passed the depth his tongue had reached and then it slid further. Finally it was all the way in and Jason let him get used to the feeling before moving. It was different than his tongue had been, this was something harder, more probing, able to twist and rub inside of him. That's exactly what Jason did, using slow, deliberate thrusts. As he got used to the new sensation he found that he really *really* liked it.

He moaned low and long, his head thrown to the side. "W-why does this- *ah haha,* why does this feel *so good?* Fuck, Jason, yes. More, give me more."

"Are you sur-" Percy lifted his head to look down at him and whatever Jason saw in his face made his pupils dilate and he removed his finger, adding another before pressing them back inside of him.

This time it stretched him a little more and burned as he went in. He breathed evenly, adjusting to the new girth, knowing that when the time came he'd be glad they took so long to prepare. The fingers moved in him, impossibly slow, and Percy marveled at the self restraint Jason was showing. Another look down and he saw Jason's gaze fixated on where his fingers were disappearing into his hole. His eyes flicked up and he caught Percy watching him. Jason flushed, the red spreading down across his chest, but he didn't look away.

He started scissoring his fingers, twisting them and stretching his passage. One particular flex of his fingers had Percy gasping and seeing stars, his hand twitching down to grasp Jason's free one where it was rubbing soothing circles against his side. Jason stopped his movements and Percy could've actually cried. "Are you okay, did I hurt-"

“No, no definitely not. That was not hurt, that was...oh fuck what *was* that? Please do it again.”

“What, do this?” He asked, curling his fingers the same way he just had. They hit that spot again, making him arch his back and squeeze Jason’s hand tightly. His cock jumped next to Jason’s face and he watched it bounce, fascinated. A slow smile spread across his face. “That was good?” It wasn’t necessary to ask, not with the way Percy was keening and wiggling around to get more of that pressure.

He panted, knees spread wide. “Fuck me. Right now. I need-I *want* to feel you inside me, *please.* Please Jason, I’m ready, I want you so bad.”

“Oh, fuck, okay yeah, yeah.” He bit his lip and watched his fingers go in and out a few more times before withdrawing them completely. His rim fluttered around the absence of something filling it.

Jason wasted no time in slicking up his cock and lining himself up, the velvety head nudging up against his hole. Jason kept one hand on his dick as he leaned over Percy’s body, bracing his arm next to his head. Percy went for a kiss but Jason dodged him, turning his face away. “Sorry, I didn’t think you’d want to after- *mmpf!”*

Percy reached up and turned his face back, smashing their lips together. Jason hesitated for a split second before returning the kiss. He gathered his knees underneath him and gently pushed forwards. Percy closed his eyes as the head of his cock slipped past the initial resistance of his body. The rest of him slid in inch by inch until he was fully sheathed, his balls resting against his ass. And, yeah, he was right. It stung much more than the others had, but it wasn’t unbearable. It helped that he was incredibly turned on and the feeling of being filled up had him blissed out. He could also admit that the alcohol running through his system probably contributed to things as well, but oddly enough, except for the sex haze his brain had slipped

into he didn't feel all that drunk. But isn't that what all drunk people say? He was pretty sure this was different, his head was clear of the fog that it had been in off and on throughout the night.

Jason's arm went under his back between it and the bed and he pulled him up slightly, hugging him close to his chest. Percy wrapped his hands around Jason and held him tightly in return. Jason waited patiently once again while he got used to the intrusion. What did he ever do to find a partner like this? So incredibly loving and caring, always making sure he was comfortable with whatever was happening. Percy felt a red hot flare of jealousy run through him as he pondered the thought that Jason and Piper had probably held each other like this before, in a similar situation. He threw his legs up and over Jason's back, locking him in possessively as he nuzzled his face into the base of his throat, scenting his hot skin.

He could *feel* Jason's cock twitch inside of him and it chased away the jealousy. Desire rose in it's stead. " *Move* ."

The hand behind his back migrated down to his hip to hold his body still. Percy remained where he was, clinging on, face pressed into his neck. Jason took a deep breath and slowly pulled almost all the way out, leaving just the tip inside of him. He paused then pushed back in equally as slow, the pace torturous but necessary. It hurt still but it was fading fast, little shocks of pleasure shooting up his body as Jason's cock reached deep within him. He nipped lightly at the skin under his lips and Jason's hips jerked once before speeding up.

Jason moaned, his eyes squeezed shut. "F-feels so good, you feel so good, Percy. You're so beautiful, I c-could look at you all day. *Fuck* , you're so *tight.* Gods, I wanna fuck you so bad." The hand on his waist tightened as he picked up the pace, driving him down into the mattress. They slid a few inches up the bed and Percy had to put one of his hands against the headboard to keep them in place.

Every once in a while Jason would brush along that spot inside of him

that had him calling out and grunting loudly. It wasn't enough though, he wanted more. "Harder, fuck me harder, don't stop. Yeah, *just like that!"* Jason adjusted his angle, reaching that spot more and more. Their voices echoed around the room, most likely disturbing their neighbors but they were so absorbed with each other that they didn't have the capacity to care.

Jason turned his head just enough to look him in the eye and Percy's ever present competitiveness with him kicked in. He wasn't sure if that was the goal but it was certainly the outcome. He released his bracing hand and they slid up again, Jason having to readjust to the displacement. It was exactly what Percy was waiting for. As soon as Jason paused, Percy let go of him with his legs and pushed off the mattress with one, rolling them so that Jason was underneath him, their bodies still connected. Jason yelped, surprised at the sudden role reversal, his hands coming up to hold onto Percy's hips to steady him. The different angle made the cock inside him reach all new places.

"Percy, what-" Percy smirked at him and grabbed his wrists, tearing them away from his waist and pinning them above his head on the pillows. Jason's surprised expression twisted into one of understanding and he got a glint in his almost black eyes. "So it's gonna be like that, then?" Jason tried to bring his knees up, presumably to flip them again but Percy sensed it and rested his feet on his thighs so he couldn't, the action raising him up off of his dick a few inches, the slide of it heavenly against his rim.

"Mmmmm, look at you." He huffed as he flexed his own thighs, raising up a little more before sinking back down. "Just laying there, enjoying this." Jason squirmed underneath him, lips parted as he looked up at him. "Do you like that?" He rocked his hips experimentally. Jason made a choked sound, trying to thrust upwards to get more friction. "Well?" He stopped moving and Jason whined.

"P-please. Percy don't do this, don't tease me. Come on, *please move.* F-fuck, ride me hard, I want-I want to watch." Jason was panting, his eyes pleading as he begged him to move.

His voice was so sweet and irresistible. He didn't have the heart to deny him any longer. He let go of his wrists and they immediately went back to his waist, his hands holding on with bruising force. Good. *Mark me* . The thought ran through his mind so fast he almost didn't catch himself thinking it. He'd examine what that meant later, but for now-

He spread his hands across Jason's belly, slipping his feet off his thighs and began to fuck him in earnest. Jason's powerful arm muscles flexed and rolled under his skin as he used his grip to aid him. Every time Percy would rise up, Jason would slam him back down. It was a good rhythm. The wet slapping of flesh surrounded them, their bodies drenched in sweat.

Percy was starting to lose control, his movements becoming uncoordinated and sloppy, his hard cock leaking as it bounced with him. He couldn't take it anymore and lifted a hand to grab ahold of it, pumping it fast and hard, chasing the end.

Jason took the opportunity to push his upper body off the bed and roll them backwards this time. Disoriented and fuck-happy, he let it happen. His back hit the bed, his head near the foot of it, his husband never pulling out. Jason settled over him again, rutting into him with abandon and Percy knew he must be getting close too.

Jason's hand knocked his away from his cock and replaced it, the foreign presence making the pleasure increase. His vision blurred as his eyes crossed and his arms found their way back around Jason's neck. It was all he could do to hold on for the ride as he was fucked into this plush hotel bed, Jason's hand working him over between their bodies.

Jason leaned forwards, lifting Percy's lower body off the bed, the change in position doing wonderful things with that spot inside him

that radiated pleasure through his entire being. His balls started to draw up and he let the release come, not even bothering to fight it. His camp beads bounced against his throat and he watched Jason's swing wildly, hypnotized by them.

He was able to tilt his head up just enough to nuzzle into Jason's neck like he knew he liked. "Jason I'm gonna cum, please don't stop, you're amazing, so amazing, I can't believe I got to m-marry you. *Oh fuck,* I-I'm so lucky. You're such a good person, you're so sweet, I-" He was rambling again, his voice partially muffled by the sweat slick skin that moved against him.

"G-go ahead, cum for me, I won't be- *hah!* -t-that far behind you." Jason managed to get out in between huffs of breath.

His orgasm hit him hard. He wasn't quite sure what he said or even what noise he made, but he knew it was loud, his vision going white as his eyes rolled up in his head. His cock pulsed in Jason's hand, splashing them both with ropes of cum. Jason fucked him through it, releasing his dick right before the pressure turned too sensitive. He snaked both his hands up under Percy's back to hold onto his shoulders from behind, keeping him in place as his thrusts became erratic. He felt cum smear against his back, but he was too lost in the clouds to really care, his body still somehow deriving pleasure from being fucked even after he was done cumming. Percy held on still, feeling Jason's head turn, searching for him, so he met him and their lips connected again. His walls clenched around Jason's dick and he felt him shutter, a warmth spreading through him and he realized what he was feeling was Jason's cum spilling inside him. He groaned against his lips, loving the sensation of being filled.

Jason pressed his face into the blankets as he came back to himself. "I'm s-" He stopped to catch his breath, "I'm sorry I didn't pull out."

Percy hummed, happy and content. "Don't be, I liked it." He ran his hands up Jason's back, fingers trailing along twitching muscles and

wet skin. The arms around him tightened in a crushing hug before they fell away and Jason slipped himself out of his body. Percy made a face at the unpleasant feeling.

Jason gave him a hand and they situated themselves the right way on the bed, throwing the secondary blanket onto the floor, covering their suitcases, and huddling together under the large duvet they'd had sex on, Percy's head resting on Jason's chest. "We should clean up." Percy whispered, his eyes already drooping.

Jason didn't answer for so long he thought he'd actually fallen asleep but then his eyes cracked open and he shrugged. "It can wait until morning."

"Mmm, okay. Hey Jason…"

Blue eyes looked down at him, a soft smile on his face. "Yeah, Percy?"

"I...I love you." He confessed. Jason's eyes went wide but he continued before he could speak. "And it's not because we got married, or...or because we just had really great sex. I love you and I think I have for a while now."

Jason swallowed and licked his lips before saying anything. "I love you, too. I was...worried you might not...you know, feel the same because…" He didn't finish his sentence but that was okay, the first part was plenty.

He leaned up and they shared a soft kiss. Something cold rolled against him. Irritated, he felt around under the blankets, coming up with the bottle of lube. He set it on his bedside table and nestled back down in the blankets. A golden glow alerted them and they both turned to watch the marriage certificate they'd left in the other room

appear on the table next to the lube. It dimmed and then flashed once more with a burst of golden light and Percy felt his wedding ring constrict almost painfully before it returned to its original state.

“I guess that's that, then.” Jason said.

Percy nodded. “Yep.”

A knock on their door sounded out. “Uh, who is it?” Jason called.

“S’me, A- *hic* -Axel.” They shared a look.

“Yeah, uh, come on in, dude.” Jason answered him.

The lock beeped and the door swung open. Axel stumbled in, a bottle of his tequila clutched in his hand. One of his eyes drooped low as he tried to focus on them. “Hey, there ya are, ya little rascals. Little angry hairy guy told me your room got- *hic* -moved. Gave me a spare key, ‘ope tha’s okay.” He waved the room key around.

“Sure, man. What’s up, what, uh, do you need?” Percy asked.

Axel blinked and looked around. “You mind if I crash here? I go ‘ome this drunk, m’wife’ll cut me legs off.”

There wasn’t really anywhere for him to sleep but Percy and Jason had acquired a soft spot for the biker over the course of the night. “That’s… yeah that’s fine, Axel. You can just-”

“Thanks a ton, little dudes.” Axel walked by them, snagging the spare blanket off the floor, heading into the bathroom. His helmet fell off his unruly head of red hair. The blanket dragged the suitcases with it, but Axel didn’t seem to mind. He stopped right before he closed the door. “M’glad I didn’t show up two minutes earlier, think I woulda got an eyeful of sumpin’ private, eh?” He winked at them and snorted with laughter as the door closed.

-Back To The Present-Taxicab-Somewhere Outside Of Vegas-

Percy’s POV

The whine of the taxi’s brakes brought him back from the memory. He was breathing hard, his fists clenched in the fabric of his jeans, the window fogging up from his breath. He tried to calm his racing heart, but it just wouldn’t listen to him. What the fuck had that been?

He refused to look at Jason but he felt his eyes boring holes into the side of his head.

Well, now they had the memory of their sex. It had been...interesting to say the least. Especially towards the end. *I...I love you.* The echo of his own sleepy, sated voice played in his head and he closed his eyes. Why had he *said* that? It was one thing to get drunk and marry somebody, or even cheat on your girlfriend knowingly the morning after, but it was something else to tell them you *loved* them. And have it said back to you.

Reflexively he stole a glance at Jason, which was a huge mistake. Jason’s cheeks were colored and his lips were parted, his eyes intense. He looked so much like he had in the memory. Percy forcibly turned away again.

“Hey, come on, guys. We’re here.” Leo’s head popped into the open door of the cab to usher them out. Outside in the hot desert air, Leo paid the cabbie and he took off as soon as he could pull the money back in through the window.

Above them the *Argo II* loomed like a giant metal cloud. Leo lowered the rising platform and they all crowded onto it. Percy accidentally bumped into Jason who jerked away so hard he bumped into Grover. “Sorry,” Jason muttered.

Percy wasn’t offended, he’d probably have done the same thing. Space was good for them, and judging by the small discharge of electrical energy that had buzzed across his skin when they’d touched, Percy guessed Jason was just barely holding it together. What they’d seen themselves doing was a lot to process.

Finally, after what seemed like ages, the lift stopped and they were able to step off onto the deck. Someone was waiting for them up there.

Hermes turned around and greeted them warmly, holding up a finger as he spoke rapidly into his phone before hanging up. “There you are, I was beginning to wonder if you were ever going to show up. I’ve got some packages to deliver, and I’m a very busy man so let’s make this quick.” He strutted over to the shocked group and drew out two letters from his messenger bag. “Here we go. For a Mr. Jackson-”

Percy reached his hand out but Hermes snatched the letter back. “Lord Hermes, you know me.”

“Ah, ah , ah. Just a minute now, Percy, let me finish. For a Mr. Jackson- *Grace* . The other one.” He handed the letter to Jason who

took it robotically. “ *This one* ,” He brandished the other letter, “Is for you, Mr. Jackson-Grace. These are from the college in New Rome. In order for you both to return next fall you must keep your information current and up to date, that includes any name changes or changes in marital status. The college will require those forms filled out and returned by the end of August.”

“We hyphenated.” Jason said, his voice monotone while he stared down at the letter addressed to *Mr. Jason Jackson-Grace.*

Hermes cleared his throat. “Yes, I hear it was a real fun wedding too. Sorry I couldn’t attend. Apollo told me all about it though. Congratulations.” He sounded sincerely happy for them. “One more thing before I go, but, uh…well this one is from…well let’s just say she’s not your favorite, eh?” He looked up at the sky nervously before reaching back in his bag and pulling out a large book-shaped object wrapped in silver and white paper. “To the misters Jackson-Grace.” Percy took the gift and Hermes’s shoes sprouted wings and he zoomed off like he wanted to be as far away from whatever was in this wrapping paper as fast as possible.

“Well? What is it, Mr. *Jackson-Grace* ?” Will asked.

Percy turned the package over. There was a single tag on it that read *From: Hera/Juno. Enjoy.* Jason’s scarred lip curled up. Percy decided to get it over with and he slipped his thumb under the tape on the paper and unwrapped it. Underneath was a large white photo album. In gold filigree across the bottom of the front cover were the words *The Wedding Of Percy Jackson And Jason Grace.*

Above that was a picture set into a gold frame bracket. It was a picture of Axel chugging a bottle of beer while Percy sat on left shoulder and Jason sat on his right. They were kissing over the top of Axel’s head, their grapevine bottles of Aqua Vitae clutched in their hands. They were both wearing stylish wedding dresses.

Frank's Tattoo

“What is it?” Frank asked. Percy realized no one else could see the front of the album except for Jason. Mutely, he turned it around to face them.

Everyone was silent for a minute, then Leo laughed and tried to hide it as a cough. Jason glared at him. “Sorry,” Leo said, not sounding sorry at all.

Nico leaned forwards and squinted to get a better look at the front cover. Percy made sure to keep a good hold of it in case Nico tried to snatch it away, but he just shook his head slowly, a wry smile tugging at his lips. “Well, I don’t know about the rest of you but I’m just dying to see all of those pictures.” Jason plucked the album out of his hands and turned it back over to face him. His eyes scanned it for a moment before he slipped it into the unzipped top of his suitcase. “Aw come on, Jason. Don’t be like that. Looking at them might help you get your memories back faster.” Nico dangled that carrot in front of them on a very short stick.

Percy *did* want to look at the photo album, but he was wary of letting the others see it. He had no idea how Hera had even gotten these pictures. For all he knew she didn’t even need a camera. Part of him secretly worried that she had simply used magic to make them, which meant there could be pictures in here that the others *would not* want to see. His worries mostly revolved around the possibility of their sex having been catalogued.

Jason picked his suitcase up and gave Nico a firm look. “No. No one else is looking at this.” Seems Jason might be along the same train of thought he was.

Frank raised his hand up a bit and said awkwardly, “I, uh, well I don’t

mean to sound like I'm pushing you to show us, but...seeing them might help *us* get our memories back faster too. I know we didn't lose the whole night, but I'd still like to have everything back. We know we were around you at least for parts of the night, so we might be in some of the pictures. Seeing familiar things triggers you to remember things right? Like with the receipt from the bar." Percy hated that Frank was right. It was kind of selfish of them to hold something back that would help the others.

Will nodded like he liked this idea. "That's right, Frank. The receipt brought back Rodrigo's. What triggered the memory you guys had in the taxi?"

Percy's hands went clammy and Jason tensed up next to him. "What memory? We didn't have a…" He couldn't continue his denial in the wake of all the disbelieving looks the others were giving them.

Leo tsked. "Riiiight. You two stared off into space for about twenty minutes, didn't seem to hear anything we said to you, and when you finally did come back you looked like you'd seen a ghost. Totally normal, yeah, no, why did we even think anything was off?"

"Oh right. Yeah we did, didn't we, Jason?" He gave Jason a look that clearly said *do something!*

Jason had the look of someone who'd just been thrown under a bus. Luckily he thought of something quick. "We remembered that biker. The one that passed us."

Coach Hedge cleared his throat. "Really? What was the lad's name, he seemed like a real swell fellow?"

A muscle ticked in Jason's jaw. Nico's smile never wavered. "Phil."

Jason said, most likely pulling that name out of his ass on the spot.

Hedge sighed and hefted his own luggage. “Strange that Axel’s second in command changed his name from Samuel to *Phil* overnight. I think Sam fits his personality much better. He really *is* a nice guy. You beat him in a couple of arm wrestling matches last night, Jason, but I’m sure you know that.”

Clearly caught in his lie, Jason gave the *do something!* task back to Percy. Hedge had met Axel, it wasn’t that far of a stretch to believe he’d also met his second. Although it’s not like Percy had an extensive knowledge about how biker gang hierarchy worked so he didn’t blame Jason for the fumble. It was an amazing attempt, but luck just wasn’t on their side today it seemed. “We don’t have to tell you what we saw.” He said simply.

Will shrugged. “Fair enough.” He said easily, but he was plainly staring at the low flush that had tinted Jason’s lighter skin tone. Beside him Nico shoved his hands in his pants pockets and opened his mouth to say something but a distinct crinkle of paper caught his attention.

Confused, Nico pulled out a crumpled piece of white paper. Percy saw a flash of writing on the top of it. It read *WALMART SUPERCENTER*. He smoothed the receipt out and read it quietly. The longer he looked at it, the more his eyebrows drew together.

“Everything okay, Nico?” Grover asked him.

“Yeah, I just…” Nico huffed a bit. “This receipt is for four cartons of eggs, two slingshots, and a bottle of lu-”

“Okay!” Jason said loudly, drowning out the item on the list that

Percy knew for a fact was the lube Will had given them last night. “I want to go put all my stuff away and eat some lunch.” He seemed to be debating something for a second and then he added, “After we eat we can look at the album a little bit.”

Will took the paper from his boyfriend and looked it over. “Well at least we know where the eggs came from now. Question is; why did we buy them?” He sighed. “This is very frustrating. Come on, Nico, let’s go try to figure this out before lunch.”

Thankfully the others agreed to get settled before they braved the pages of the album. Percy turned and bent over to grab the handle of his luggage and his tattoo gave a painful twinge as the skin was pulled. He sucked in a breath, putting a hand over it and tugging the shirt away from the wound.

“Oh! Here,” Leo stuck his hand into his tool belt and fished out three small vials filled with golden liquid. “Nectar, apparently, works on healing tattoos as well as it does anything else. Who knew right?” He handed one to Percy, one to Jason, and the last one went to Frank.

Percy was hesitant to drink it though. “How did you figure that out?” Leo grinned and lifted the back of his hair to reveal his fully healed red and gold phoenix. He had to admit that it looked pretty impressive. Whoever did it must be really talented.

“Help with the headache too,” Jason muttered before unstoppering his vial.

“Ah ah ah!” Nico said, making a ‘times out’ gesture. “You do that and you’ll be stuck with those forever.”

“We’re *already* stuck with these forever, Nico.” Percy said. “Tattoos

don't just go away."

"I mean, you could always pour peroxide over it and bubble out some of the ink. They're fresh enough." Nico suggested. Will looked down at him, aghast, as if that was the worst medical advice he'd ever heard of. Jason looked positively green at that idea and Percy's stomach churned just thinking about it. Frank quickly drank his nectar. "I'm *kidding.* Jeez, lighten up a little."

"Does that actually work?" Grover asked, interested despite his queasy expression.

"Not very well. It would most likely cause a lot of distortion once it healed and make the tattoo unrecognizable but...it would be very painful and end up looking like shit." Will explained, still looking like he could have lived happily without ever hearing that.

Nico rolled his eyes. "I said I was kidding."

Percy opened his vial. "I'd rather have very nice looking matching tattoos than ugly, blurry ones." With that, he and Jason drank their nectar. The sweet liquid was a balm to every ache and pain that was slowly coming back after the painkillers had started to wear off. His side itched like crazy for all of about three seconds and then it was gone. He lifted shirt. The lightning bolt and the trident blazed across the side of his ribs, vibrant and complimenting against his tan skin. He hadn't really taken the time to actually examine it when he had seen it for the first time. It actually had a lot more detail to it than he had originally thought. The symbols were artfully shaded, each and every line was straight as an arrow, the gradient to the shading never wavering, the trident looked extremely sharp, and the lightning bolt was just as precise. It was obviously done by someone just as skilled as Leo's tattoo artist, if not the same person. He ran his fingers across it. The skin was smooth and without flaw. "Did we have to get them so *big?* "

Jason looked up from investigating his own tattoo. His stood out much more starkly against his alabaster skin, the dark black lines drawing the eye immediately. Like a marble statue with a spot of veined color through it. “Obviously we were trying to make a statement.” Jason’s gaze flicked down to Percy’s tattoo and then…no he wasn’t imagining it. They fell lower.

Percy yanked his shirt back down to cover his hips. The nectar had thankfully healed the bruising but there was no doubt that was what Jason had been looking for. Jason righted his own shirt and averted his eyes guiltily. Luckily no one appeared to take notice of the tense moment.

“Alright, Frank, let’s see what you’ve got.” Leo nudged Frank with his elbow a few times. “Can’t be worse than what those two got, that’s for sure.”

Frank nervously toyed with the end of the wrap on his arm. “I don’t know…I almost don’t want to find out.”

Grover nudged his other side, mirroring Leo’s action. “Come on, man. Weren’t you the one that suggested looking at the pictures to trigger memories? This might do it too. What’s there to be afraid of? It’s already there, you can’t change that now. It might be something cool like Leo’s, there’s only one way to find out.” He said encouragingly. The sight of the three of them acting chummy and well acquainted was strange. They were friends, obviously they all were, but Grover was more of a stay-on-the-outskirts kind of guy unless he was with him or Annabeth. Or Juniper and Hedge, but those were to be expected. Grover had, he assumed, invited all of them here for his bachelor party so it wasn’t like Grover disliked any of them. Percy wondered what had happened last night that allowed Frank and Leo to break through Grover’s usually introverted shield. GTA’ing a golf cart and subsequently wrecking it into a glass pyramid must have forged quite the bond.

Frank looked conflicted, debating it over in his head. Finally he sighed, “You’re right.” Frank picked at the end of the pink medical wrap until a piece big enough to grab loosened up. He peeled the wrap off slowly, revealing the protective gauze padding underneath. When the last of the stretchy wrap fell away, he dropped it into the trash can that Leo slid over to him. The gauze was somewhat saturated with the ointment the artist had applied over the finished tattoo. As he peeled the gauze off his skin he used it to wipe away the sticky residue.

Frank’s tattoo was...impressive to say the least. And big. Starting at his wrist a scaly tail wound its way up his arm, getting thicker as it went, eventually forming into the body, neck, and head of a Chinese dragon. It was colored as well, done in shades of gold and red similar to Leo’s phoenix. How that tattoo had gotten done in one night was a complete mystery to Percy. He couldn’t deny that it was totally badass, though.

“I...okay, so it-it’s not as... *bad* …as I thought it would be.” Frank said as he took in the dragon that was now permanently affixed into his skin.

Coach Hedge whistled low. “Damn, Zhang, that thing’s a beast.”

“Literally,” Percy couldn’t help but say. It earned him an unimpressed side eye from Frank. Percy put his hands up in surrender. “Hey, could be worse, man.”

“A lot worse.” Jason added, hand subconsciously hovering over his side.

“That is…” Leo said, tilting his head so he could follow the trail of the dragon, “So fucking awesome!”

Grover patted Frank on the back, “Honestly? He’s right. Looks good on you, Frank.” Everyone nodded in agreement.

Frank looked back down at his arm, some unreadable emotion in his eyes. Percy wondered if he was thinking of his grandma and his mom. The tie to his Chinese ancestry in the style of the dragon would probably have made Grandma Zhang proud. He lowered his arm. “I’m gonna…go think about this some more.” Frank brushed past Leo and went downstairs, the sound of a door opening and closing a few seconds later telling them that he’d escaped to his room. Percy made a mental note to check on him later after he’d had time to work things out.

Hedge cracked his neck, starling them. “Alright, kids, go put your stuff away, lunch is in thirty.” When no one moved he added, “Got it?!” and started shoo-ing them towards the door.

They quickly filed downstairs and into their rooms.

When Leo had rebuilt the *Argo II* after its destruction in the Gaea fight he had rearranged some of the interior structure. That included room placement. Percy’s door now stood right next to Jason’s on the male side of the hallway, which under normal circumstances would be fine. Cool, even. But with the way Jason had flinched away from him earlier, he wasn’t too enthralled about it. How could you have space away from someone when you literally shared a wall with them?

Percy opened his door and slipped inside before Jason had even grabbed the handle on his door. He breathed a sigh of relief, happy to finally be back on familiar ground…or boat. He threw the garment bag on his bed and left his suitcase where it was by the door. He picked Guido up and set the still-sleeping lobster on his bedside table. Guido stirred a little, his consciousness reaching out to brush against Percy’s, then falling back into a slumber. He smiled at the little crustacean and

rubbed a finger over his head.

He set about unpacking his suitcase, putting his clothes in their proper places (mostly he just tossed them all into the dirty clothes bin), and laying out anything odd or out of place next to the garment bag. He did his best to keep his thoughts away from anything that might cause another memory to play, the incessant rumbling of his stomach demanding food now. Enough time had probably gone by now so he decided to make his way to the kitchen.

Percy stood up and stretched, marveling at the wonder that was nectar's healing properties. He felt none of the after effects of his and Jason's intense night of...well everything that happened. He almost missed the reminder.

Stop it. Stop thinking about that, He reprimanded himself mentally, *Jason is not your partner. You're a terrible person, Percy Jackson .You should be ashamed of yourself.*

He sighed and grabbed the handle of his door, pulling it open only to come face to face with Jason.

Dresses and Drawn Dicks

Chapter Notes

> Apologies to the commenter who praised this fic for being low on angst. You get a little bit of it in this chapter, but with this kind of situation, that's to be expected.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

So much for giving him space. Percy stood awkwardly, the door handle still clutched his hand. He contemplated just shutting the door in his face so he didn't have to deal with whatever it was Jason wanted, but quickly disregarded that idea. The ship was big but not big enough for them to avoid each other forever. Although he thought Jason might've preferred taking some time to himself before he confronted him again. Percy waited for him to say something. He wasn't the one lurking outside someone's door, after all. In the background he saw Nico and Will leaving Nico's room. They saw Percy and Jason, then saw Percy watching them. Nico whispered something to Will, who rolled his eyes and pulled Nico around the corner towards the kitchen with a smile.

Jason hadn't noticed them but he did take a deep breath, eyes studiously fixed somewhere to the upper left hand side of Percy's head, and said, "We should probably talk about...that."

Percy focused on the vein pulsing in Jason's throat so he didn't have to look at his face. "Talk about what?" He said offhanded, feigning ignorance, giving Jason a way out this. They could just pretend they didn't see what they saw, remember what they did. It was the coward's way out, but one Percy wouldn't mind trying. He had just mentally berated himself for thinking about Jason, so not talking about it seemed like a good way to avoid that.

No such luck. He felt Jason's eyes on him as he finally looked down. "You know what."

“Can we do this later? It’s almost lunch time and I don’t know about you, but I’m starving. A night of physical activity really takes it out of you, you know?”

Jason crossed his arms, blocking the doorway. Percy tried not to feel caged but it must have shown on his face because Jason’s features softened and he shuffled to the side a bit so there was an opening big enough for him in case he decided to make a run for it. “We can’t avoid this conversation forever, Percy.” His words rang true and Percy hated that he was right.

“I know, Jason, it’s just that...last time we tried to ‘talk about it’, you ended up-” He paused as the door on the other side of Percy’s opened and Leo walked out. He took one look at the way they were standing, tense and tightly wound, and hurried past them in the direction Will and Nico had gone. Percy dropped his voice to a hissing whisper and stepped forwards, pointing a finger into Jason’s chest, a sudden coil of anger swirling inside him. “- *on your knees in front of me.* Can’t really ‘talk’ when you have a d-”

Jason swatted his hand away, his teeth clenched. “Hey, *you* kissed *me* first, remember? You can’t put all the blame on me!” He said the last part loudly and Percy hoped all of their friends had already vacated the residential area and made it to the kitchen. Jason seemed to realize the height of his volume because he took a quick glance around the hallway.

Percy crossed his own arms defensively. “ *You* suggested we shower *together* .”

“Don’t act like you’re free of guilt, I didn’t hear you complaining. In fact I think what you said was,” Jason’s voice pitched a little lower, “‘Oh, Jason, feels good, *gods don’t st-’*”

Percy covered Jason's mouth with his hand quickly, cheeks burning furiously as he watched scarred lips form the words he'd said in the shower. It was quiet for a moment as they both stared each other down, Percy's hand still silencing him. A few rooms down another door opened and they both turned to watch Grover rush out and walk fast down the hallway without ever looking in their direction.

"Do you think he heard?" Jason asked, pulling Percy's hand away.

He glared at him. "Of course he heard. I'd be more surprised if he *hadn't."*

"Well...it's not like he didn't already know we'd…"

"Yes but you didn't have to *spell it out for him.* Look, Jason, I *know* it isn't all your fault that we...did that...but I just really don't want to talk about it right now. Or think about it." Lies. It was a lie. He *did* want to think about it, preferably in the company of no one so he could try to puzzle out just what the fuck he was feeling about it all. But he couldn't let himself do that. At least not right now, not with Jason here, distracting him every time he opened his mouth or quirked an eyebrow.

Jason ran a frustrated hand through his hair, his other resting on his hip. "Okay, but we *can't* avoid this. We weren't awkward about it before, and if we are now then it's just going to make things worse."

"It wasn't awkward until you repeated what I said." Percy told him.

"That's not what made it awkward. It got awkward after we watched ourselves having full on, penetrative sex." Jason leaned down a fraction and Percy felt the heat radiating off his body. Jason was always so damn *warm.* "And actually, while we're on that topic...why

don't you tell me what you were thinking about when you caused that to happen."

Percy leaned back quickly. "I don't know what you're talking about. The memory just...came back to us."

Jason clearly did not believe him, and Percy didn't blame him. His voice had sounded false even to his own ears. He glared up at him in defiance.

"You're lying." Yeah, it seems he was doing that a lot today. Nice of him to finally point it out. Jason tilted his head and Percy dreaded what was going to come out of his mouth next. "I bet I could guess." Percy pressed his lips into a thin line, refusing to say anything. "I bet…" He leaned down again, putting his face over Percy's shoulder so he could speak quietly into his ear. Percy watched Jason's jugular pulse wildly, betraying the speed at which his heart was beating. "You...were thinking about... *me* ." He began to draw back, taking his warmth with him.

The sound of footsteps startled them both and Percy grabbed the front of Jason's shirt and dragged him inside his room, slamming the door behind him. He let go of the fabric and shoved him backwards, his back colliding with the door. Percy left his hands on Jason's chest, holding him away at arms length while he tried to formulate a response. The heart underneath them beat a rapid staccato.

"I was thinking about how *wrong* it was, how we *never* should have allowed ourselves to do that. I wasn't thinking about *you* specifically, and certainly not in the way you're...implying." Just more lies for him to hurl. *Go ahead, Percy, while you're at it why not just flat out tell him how nice it felt to be held by him, tell him how much you want him to do it again.* He ground his teeth together, trying to clear his head.

“You…you’re lying again.” Jason said slowly, almost as if he hadn’t fully believed in his theory until that moment. His hands came up to wrap loosely around Percy’s wrists, but he didn’t push them away.

Percy used his grip on his shirt to lift him a few inches off the door and shove him back into it, not hard enough to hurt him, but enough to startle him. He did it again and this time he came forwards with the shoving motion, crowding him against the door. “Don’t-” He snarled, but Jason cut him off, a fire in his eyes as his lips curled back over his teeth.

“No, *you don’t.* Don’t try to tell me you aren’t just as confused about this as I am. I’m so fucking lost, Percy. I don’t know what to do, I don’t know what to *feel,* I can’t get you out of my fucking head.” He admitted, his hands tightening on his wrists. “I understand that this is bad, really bad, but when you look at me like you do it drives me crazy. *I don’t want to be like that.* Tell me…tell me right now, right here, that you aren’t affected by this too, and I’ll turn around and leave and we can do it your way and try to pretend that it never happened, but if you can’t…then we need to figure this shit out.”

“I…It-it doesn’t matter. Why would it?” Jason had said he felt lost. That about sums it up for Percy too. Jason wasn’t going to take anything other than a yes or no answer, apparently, because he stayed silent, a challenge written across his face. That look ignited the same competitive feeling he’d gotten last night when Jason had turned his head and caught his eye while he was fucking him. Percy squashed that feeling down deep, determined to ignore it, willing the anger to come back. “ *Fine.* Yes, of course I do. You’re lost? Well I’m fucking *scared,* Jason. I’m so scared because I’ve loved Annabeth for so long and in the course of one night there’s a very good chance that I’ve fucked my entire relationship up. And I know for a fact that you’re scared too. You’re trying so hard to make it work with Piper. She’s drawing away from you and you’re doing everything you can to be who she wants you to be, but you’re *scared* you *can’t* . What do you think is going to happen when they find out we *cheated* on them willingly?” Throwing Jason’s relationship issues in his face was an asshole thing to do, but Percy was mad and he wanted to get Jason to understand just how much of a mess they’ve managed to make of this

situation.

A flash of anger and hurt crossed Jason's face but then he was rising to the challenge, throwing things back at him that Percy wasn't ready to hear. "Yeah, okay, this is probably going to be the last straw for Piper, I get that, but I'm going to do my best to fix it. I'm going to try to make it better, explain things to her. But, dude, really? Using my girlfriend to make me back off is a low blow. I don't usually mention this to you, Percy, but you kinda deserve it right now. You need to hear this because I don't think anyone else has the balls to say it. *My* relationship is bad?" Jason laughed, harsh and cruel, "Who are you Percy?" Confused, Percy drew his eyebrows together, watching Jason warily, waiting for whatever came next. When he didn't answer, Jason laughed again. "Let me clarify. Who are you when Annabeth let's you off your lease?"

Percy drew back as if he'd been slapped, trying to tug his hands away but Jason held on fast, reversing who was restraining who. "What the fuck are you talking about, Jason?"

"When you're with her you hold yourself back. You take part of yourself and hide it away inside, only letting it out when you're not around her. Everything you do, you make sure she's okay with first. Why do you do that? Because you think it's what a good boyfriend should do?" He didn't give Percy a chance to answer but that coil of anger came back full force. "You're wrong. You can't live your life for someone else, it isn't *healthy.* You can't be someone else just because you think it's what she expects. I love Annabeth, Percy, she's one of my best friends, but you two are not good together. *Everyone sees it.* They just don't say anything because you've been with her for so long. Piper is drawing away from me? Interesting you should mention that, when you can't even see that your own girlfriend is doing that too. You recognize the signs in my girlfriend, but you're blind to your own. Sure, Piper avoids me more and more recently, but at least she doesn't avoid kissing me."

If Percy's hands hadn't been restrained he would've slammed him against the door again. "Shut up, Jason, you don't know anything. Me

and Annabeth are *fine.* Avoid kissing me? That *one* time? That's because she hadn't brushed her teeth yet that day, and she-"

Jason leaned forwards as best he could. "That didn't stop you last night." He whispered in his ear. Warmth flushed through his body as he realized what part of last night he meant. Jason leaned back again, resting his head against the wood behind him as he looked at Percy. "'Fine' is a funny way of saying you know something is wrong. You told me once that you're worried she didn't feel the same way she used to towards you, and now you're watching it play out. She's just more subtle about it than Piper is. You're not stupid, Percy. You're incredibly smart. So why can't you see what everyone else can?"

"Every relationship has rocky points, Jason. That's why you work *through* them. You know, like *you're* trying to do with Piper? If there is something wrong between me and Annabeth, then we'll talk about it and we'll sort it out, that's how these things work. I'm *sorry* I used Piper against you, and I know you're just trying to get back at me for that, so let's just drop this subject and go have lunch like we're supposed to." He did his best to cool the anger inside him. They had both crossed lines that they never had before, both said things they shouldn't have. Jason's claims weren't entirely unfounded, but he was loath to admit that out loud to him right now. Of course he's had problems with Annabeth before, but nothing they hadn't been able to work out. Jason knew that, he was always the first to hear about things like that because, like Leo and Piper, Grover and Annabeth are best friends. Percy understood where Jason was coming from when he said he couldn't talk to Leo about the Piper situation. Plus...him and Jason had a habit of sharing and talking about things that they didn't tell anyone else about.

Talking about Annabeth was bringing up feelings he'd really rather not deal with right now, but he supposed he only had himself to blame. He'd steered this conversation towards this topic. Poked the metaphorical bear and antagonized him to lash back.

Jason's jaw worked furiously, as if he had a lot more to say on this subject but was trying to reign himself in like Percy had. "Fine. I'm

sorry too. I didn't mean to hurt you like that. But Percy, did you hear yourself just now? People in relationships are supposed to *talk* about things and *work them out* ." He said it as if he was trying to emphasize a point.

"We aren't *in* a relationship."

Jason tapped his wedding ring against the back of Percy's wrist and he thought he was going to spout something about marriage, but all he said was, "Friendships are relationships too. Just of a different kind. I meant what I said in the shower. I don't want this to ruin our friendship, and we almost just let it. We *need* to discuss this." Both their chests were heaving, breath coming short and fast after the angry words they'd hurled at each other.

Suddenly all of the fight bled out of him. The tension in his shoulders leaving, his hands unclenching. Jason let his wrists go and Percy's arms fell to his sides. He let his forehead come forward and rest against Jason's chest. Gentle arms wound themselves around his back and Jason pulled him closer, bridging the last few inches between them. Percy hugged him back, letting their apology manifest in the physical way. Just like back in the taxi when Jason pressed against him he felt comforted and calm. He *loved* fighting with Jason but he *hated* arguing with him. Mean words and petty revenge just wasn't the way they did things together. Their relationship had always been competitive playfulness, sharp jokes, and an easy atmosphere. This had been ugly and, as Jason had said, a threat to their friendship.

"I'm sorry." He mumbled again, Jason's chest muffling the sound. "We will discuss this, I promise. Let's get through a few pages of the album first, get a little more to talk about and then we can get into the details."

Jason squeezed him tightly one more time before pulling back a little so he could see him. Their faces ended up close together, Percy could make out each fiber of electric blue that made up Jason's intense

irises. “You don’t have to apologize again. But if you’re going to then I will too. I’m sorry, Percy. You’re right, let’s go have lunch and bear through the no doubt embarrassing pictures in that book. And…you are, you know?”

“I am what?” He asked, confused again.

“Incredibly smart. I wasn’t lying when I said that.” Jason brought one of his hands around from where it had been resting against his lower back and used it to brush some of Percy’s hair off his forehead for him.

Percy’s traitorous heart did a flip behind his ribs. “I thought I was so beautiful that you wanted to look at me all day?” He pulled a Jason and brought back some more of their embarrassing sex induced nonsense talk. Percy felt like a rubber band today, snapping wildly from one emotion to the next with almost no warning. He wanted to blame it on the alcohol but at this point he was stone cold sober, and the only thing at fault here was his own inner turmoil.

Jason didn’t look away, eyes searching his face even as the tips of his ears turned pink. “You can be both.” He whispered, and the unexpected answer charged the air around them. Why was this the outcome every time they got too close today? It was as if an invisible magnet was pulling them together no matter how much they resisted and said they shouldn’t.

Percy swallowed around a lump in his throat. “Oh…” Was all he could think to say.

There was a moment when they both inched forward and he thought they were going to kiss, but then Guido twitched in his sleep, his little legs scuffling against the wood. They jumped apart, startled by the sudden sound. Jason laughed, rubbing the back of his neck as he

watched Guido go still again.

“I guess we should join the others in the kitchen.” Jason said while he straightened his shirt from where it had bunched up when Percy had used it to yank him around.

“Yeah, they’re probably waiting for us.” Percy opened the door again, relieved that no one was in the hallway.

“Hang on a minute, I want to see something” Jason called before he could make it out of the doorway.

Jason walked over to the bed and after a moment's hesitation, unzipped the garment bag. Percy had almost forgotten about it. A waterfall of silk, satin, tulle, and taffeta spilled out of the opening and fanned across his blanket. It had been a few years since he’d helped his mom pick out her own wedding dress when she married Paul, but the names of the different fabrics came back easily.

The satin was a light green color, probably a mint if he had to guess. It looked like the tulle went with the satin cloth because it matched it’s delicate green. It was the exact same dress that Percy had been wearing in the photo on the front cover of the photo album, which meant the pale blue silk and taffeta wedding dress was Jason’s. Curious, he joined him next to his bed and let his hands card over the fabric. It was insanely soft and slippery, the tulle and taffeta slightly more rough in texture compared to the silk and satin. Jason wordlessly helped him spread the dresses apart so they could see the entirety of both.

There was a lot more of the blue fabric than the green, which made sense because Percy’s dress was much more slim fitting, made for someone smaller, both in body mass and height. His dress was mostly exposed satin, with the bodice artfully creased and folded, designed to

hug the upper body and meld smoothly into the thin straps that held it up. The skirt was also satin, with a thin layer of tulle underneath it to make it not quite so skin tight and to give just a hint of flare at the bottom. It looked like a cross between an A-line and a Mermaid style dress. The irony was not lost on him. Luckily whoever this dress had *actually* been made for didn't seem to be too well endowed in the breast area so the bodice seemed to fit him reasonably well from what he remembered from the picture. It was also a good coincidence that the woman had been just about Percy's size and build.

Jason's was obviously tailored for someone who was more broad in the chest and waist, and the skirt of his was fluffed inside and out with the taffeta, resulting in a more traditional wedding dress look. Ballgown style, his brain supplied. Jason's sleeves were more thick, with an off the shoulder design. His silk bodice was wrapped in a layer of thin lace, and he was also lucky in that his dresses' intended wearer had smaller breasts so it hadn't sagged when he'd worn it. It was curious that the garters they'd found around the pineapple had been such deeper shades of green and blue than their wedding dresses had been. He didn't think too hard about it though.

They stared mutely at the dresses, both of them half expecting a memory to trigger from them, but after a few minutes had passed and nothing had happened they turned and left the room. They were quiet as they walked down the hallway together, stopping only for Jason to dip into his own room and grab the photo album before they carried on towards the kitchen. As they got closer Percy heard the garble of low, hushed voices talking quickly. Jason gave him a look, letting him know he'd heard their friends too.

The voices were too tangled together to really make out what was being said but a few snippets and words managed to get through.

"-really. Don't believe me-"

"Do you think they-"

“-see them in the hallway?”

“-so cute-”

“-she said that he-”

“No way!”

“-shouldn’t be talking about them without them here.”

That last one was definitely Frank, and Percy took a moment to be glad that he had come out of his room and that he was objecting to the gossip. He debated pausing outside the kitchen door, but Jason shook his head and walked through, Percy right behind them.

As soon as they stepped into the dining room everyone fell silent at once. It was so quiet in there that Festus’ inner machinery could be heard clanking far below. He wasn’t moving yet though, and Percy wondered why. What reason would they have to still be in Nevada?

The others were busy trying not to look guilty as Percy and Jason walked to their chairs and sat down, Jason dropping the album on the table where it smacked against the wood and made a few of them flinch.

“So, what’s for lunch?” Jason asked no one in particular. When no one answered he added, “I hear the gossip is quite good today, how about that?”

The tip of Leo's nose ignited and he quickly snuffed it out. Percy joined in on Jason's revenge against them. He tutted. "No, Jason, the gossip is only good if it's about *other* people. We wouldn't be interested since the topic is us."

"Ahhhh," Jason said, like he had just figured out a particularly hard question. "You're right, my bad. Sandwiches it is, then." He looked around at the people sitting with them.

Nico sighed and said, "Look, you can't expect us *not* to talk about it. It's like watching a car crash and then just not ever mentioning it."

"Wow, Nico. Thank you for comparing us to a horrible accident." Percy deadpanned. "I'm touched, no really, I am."

Nico shrugged, "You're welcome." Percy had honestly set himself up for that one. "And I'm sure you were touched...just not be me." Nico very pointedly turned his gaze on Jason. Behind him, Will pressed a hand to his mouth to hide his amused smile. A few snickers bubbled up here and there, but Percy was too busy being a deer caught in the headlights to see who they came from.

Jason threw an empty cup at Nico, which he easily dodged while laughing.

"Alright, that's enough!" Coach Hedge said, finally stepping into the conversation. "Nico, quit teasing them, they've had a hard enough day as it is. Let's peacefully get through this lunch without anybody losing an eye. And Jason, no throwing the dishware, or you get kitchen duty until we get back." Jason's lips pressed into a thin line, but he didn't say anything.

Hedge nodded, satisfied, and food appeared on his plate. The others followed suit, shooting glances over at Percy and Jason every now and then. As Jason assembled his sandwich, Leo picked up the remote that was linked to the wall screens in the dining room. That was another thing he had changed when he'd rebuilt the ship. The screens could still show the camps, but now they weren't limited to only that. They could pick up T.V. channels and even play movies, if anyone wanted the disorienting experience that was watching a film plastered across the walls.

He clicked a few buttons and the screens lit up, he flicked through a few channels before finally settling on a local news station. The reporter was a curvy redhead in a smart looking business suit. She patted down her hair and smiled blankly at the camera until her cue to talk came on.

"Thank you so much for tuning in, I'm Katie Linders. LVKR is live in front of the Olympus Hotel and Casino here in downtown Vegas where police are investigating a case of vandalism. Some time last night, it's reported that someone had *climbed* , yes climbed, the famous Zeus statue that sits in the fountain out front of the Olympus and drew a phallic member on the statue's face." Percy dropped his fork into his pancakes, his head whipping up to watch the news. He saw the other's also start to pay more attention. "This is not the first time it's been vandalized, but this time, the vandal got a little...creative. Take a look."

The camera panned over to the statue where a utility truck had a man in overalls suspended in it's lift bucket next to the face of Zeus. The man was busy rubbing the marble cheek of the statue with a rag, a spray bottle held in his hand. The camera zoomed in and he moved the rag away, revealing a slightly smeared dick drawn on Zeus' carved face for about a fraction of a second before the news site's profanity filter kicked in and the dick was blurred out. The man went back to his task and the camera focused back on the reporter.

"As you can see, the statue stands about thirty feet high, an impressive feat to climb by any means. Witnesses say that the vandal climbed the

statue while yelling profanities at it. When he reached the top, it's stated that he then took out a sharpie and drew the genitalia on the side of the marble face. It's said he then flipped the statue off and yelled into the sky saying, and I quote, 'Fight me, you cowardly d*** head, you piece of s***, you're a horrible father.'" The news bleeped out the cuss words as she said them. Everyone turned their heads to look at Jason, who was watching the report with growing horror. The lady continued, "What that means remains to be seen, but witnesses say the man was clearly intoxicated. Who would risk the wrath of the Mighty Zeus otherwise? And incur the wrath they did. In a shocking turn of events, it's said that moments after the phallus was drawn and the challenge issued, a bolt of lightning, yes you heard me right, an *actual* bolt of lightning struck at the statue. Witnesses claim the man jumped from the statue right before the bolt hit and they say it *moved* to follow him. The man fell thirty feet and landed in the salt water fountain below, the bolt missing him by mere inches. The stray electricity struck the edge of the fountain's marble rim."

The camera zoomed over to the fountain again and showed a large black scorch mark on the rim before moving back to the lady. "The man then walked out of the water, miraculously uninjured. That's not the only strange thing about this story, however. The man had an accomplice with him and, while the second man, who is described as a blond Caucasian, did not actually climb the statue, he instead stood on the edge of the fountain and hurled similar obscenities at the salt water. Again the phrase about being a 'horrible father' was heard. Witnesses report that when the lightning struck, the blond man seemed to reach out and *pull* the lighting bolt towards him and away from the other man. These witnesses are believed to be as equally intoxicated as the vandals were, and their account is hesitantly retold. Well that's it for now, folks, thanks for tuning in once again. It's been a pleasure reporting for you. It's never a dull day in Las Vegas. This is Katie Linders, signing off." The screens went black as Leo clicked them off.

Everyone turned their gaze from Jason and onto Percy. The reporter said the man on the fountain had been blond, so that must mean *he* had climbed up on Zeus, drew a dick across his face and called him a coward. The real Zeus had obviously heard him, judging by the fact that he'd once again tried to kill him. He looked at Jason, who had his sandwich suspended midair, halfway to his open mouth. He dropped it

and looked back to Percy.

A wave of dizziness swept across him and his sight started to fade. He saw a dragon tattooed arm quickly pull his plate of pancakes away before he face planted into them. Leo snatched Jason’s plate as he too slumped forwards, both of them succumbing to the memory.

Chapter End Notes

> Frank, the pancakes would have been softer than the table, my dude.
>
> Also, Annabeth isn't villainized in this, despite how it might look from what Jason said

A Monumental Vandalism

-Flashback-Amaro's Food Truck/Statue of Zeus-

Percy's POV

Their feet pounded against the pavement, their breaths coming fast and hard, as they ran through the streets of Vegas. The handcuffs locked around Percy's left wrist jangled loudly as they bounced with the swing of his arms. He took a quick glance over at Jason.

Jason looked over too and smiled wide, his eyes sparkling with mirth and excitement and maybe a little bit of fear. The pineapple was tucked under one arm like a football being carried to the endzone, it's green leaves swaying in the dry desert wind. Percy smiled back and laughed loudly, adrenaline coursing through his veins. Behind them the screech of police sirens got farther and farther away.

Jason skidded to a stop and braced himself against a light pole, huffing to catch his breath. Percy joined him, leaning over to rest his hand on his knees while he gasped. His lungs never were quite the same since Tartarus.

Jason pushed off the pole and lifted his pineapple in victory. "Yes!" He laughed at the night sky.

Percy snorted and looked back in the direction they'd come from. "I think we lost them. Your pineapple okay?" He asked.

Jason gave him a hand up, planting a smiling kiss against his lips. "He's fine, thanks to you. I was worried they were really going to get

you for a second there." He played idly with the handcuffs that dangled from Percy's wrist.

"Pshhhhhh, like a couple of mortal cops could take me."

Jason pushed him back a few steps playfully. "That one cop had you bent over the hood of his car. He managed to cuff you. I was almost jealous, you know, watching another man do that to you." He waggled his eyebrows.

Percy waved his cuffed arm around, "He only got *one* cuff on me, thank you. And if you were so jealous then you should have saved me sooner, so don't complain."

Jason scoffed, "I had to wait for the opportune moment. We were lucky those girls showed up when they did, otherwise that would've gone completely different."

"No, what we're really lucky for is that Amelia is an MMA fighter." Percy laughed, remembering the look on that cop's face as Amelia clotheslined him and cuffed him with his partner's set of handcuffs to the door handle of his squad car.

Jason smiled fondly at the memory. "Yeah, she really is a badass."

His side gave a painful throb and he winced, lifting his shirt to make sure the protective wrap over his tattoo hadn't come off in the tussle with the cops. It was still in place, luckily, but the physical activity had aggravated it like crazy.

"Yeah, mine hurts too." Jason said, shifting on his feet slightly.

“Carrying your heavy ass for a few blocks was *not* the best idea.”

He rolled his eyes at him while he took his bottle of Aqua Vitae out of his pocket, half surprised it had managed to stay there through their mad rush evading the cops. He unscrewed the cap while Jason looked around at their surroundings. “It was your choice to carry me. You could’ve set me down as soon as we got away. By the way, how’s your leg?”

He looked down at the two little holes ripped in the thigh of his jeans. “I don’t even feel it. Also, what’s the fun of a rescue if it doesn’t look dramatic and heroic?” Jason joked, also withdrawing his bottle from his pocket and uncapping it.

Percy had to laugh at that because Jason looked heroic doing anything. Saving people had nothing to do with it. “Dramatic? Jason, you are the *king* of drama. You don’t even have to try, drama just magnetizes to you.”

“Yeah, pretty sure it’s a curse actually. Oh well,” Jason sighed over exaggeratedly before lifting his bottle up to clink it against Percy’s. “Let’s drink so we forget about the open wounds in our sides.”

Percy clinked his bottle back, “Pretty sure that’s not good tattoo aftercare, but I’m too drunk to give a shit, so-” He drank long and deep from his bottle, the sweet, smooth liquid tasting of his mom’s homemade cookies. He wondered if the Aqua Vitae had a small amount of nectar in it. Then he wondered if it was safe for Grover if it did.

His train of thought slowly drifted as his body absorbed the alcohol. He felt his skin flush and saw Jason’s do the same, turning an adorable pink around his cheekbones and ears.

“Wha’? Why are you lookin’ at me?” Jason asked, his words slurring as the alcohol refreshed his intoxicated state.

Percy hummed and kept staring for a minute before remembering that people usually expected answers when they asked questions. All of a sudden he was very close to Jason without recollection of how he got there. He pressed into his slightly broader chest and kissed the side of his jaw. “Cuz I like to. Your face is...my favorite thing to look at.” He let his lips run down the length of Jason’s jawline, then back up.

Jason turned his head and caught his lips in a proper kiss, wrapping the arm that wasn’t holding the pineapple around his waist lightly. His bottle was cold through the fabric of his shirt but he couldn’t care less, Jason’s soft lips demanding all of his attention. He ran his tongue across them, feeling the slight dip from the scar that marked them. His mouth tasted like the Aqua Vitae, but the way it made itself known to him; brownies from his favorite bakery in New Rome. It gave him a small thrill knowing that nectar also tasted like a baked good to Jason.

Jason giggled right before his stomach gave a small growl. Percy broke their kiss and giggled with him, the sound infectious and happy.

“Sorry,” Jason whispered, “The last thing I ate was that cake you smeared across my face.”

Percy kissed him one more time before taking another drink of his liquor, Jason following his actions a second later. “S’okay, let’s get something to eat then.” He said, then glared at him again, “And you’re the one that started the cake thing.”

Jason covered his mouth with his arm, bottle held lightly in his hand,

his eyes bright and soft. “You looked very cute with frosting on your nose.”

Percy had to look away from the tender way Jason was watching him. It made his heart swell in his chest. “You’re a sap.”

“Mhmm, for you? Yeah.” Gentle fingers directed his chin so he was facing him again. Jason bit his lip, obviously debating on something before finally saying, “I’m really happy we get to do this now. I’ve always felt...close to you.” This time it was Jason who looked away. “But now it’s…”

He couldn’t help the giddy feeling that soared inside him. “Yeah, I feel it too.”

Jason took a deep relieved breath before letting his hand fall away. “So. The piña coladas were a bust. All we got was this pineapple and a lousy pair of handcuffs. Where do you want to eat?”

Percy searched the nearby shops, his eyes landing on a small food truck parked in a deserted lot. People milled around it, ordering food and wandering off with paper plates. He nodded towards it and Jason shrugged.

They wandered over, stumbling slightly from the unbalanced effect their drunken state gave them. As they got closer he saw the name of the truck written across the side. It took him a bit to decipher the cursive writing but as they fell into the back of the line he finally made out *Amaro’s*.

“This smells really good.” Jason muttered as he watched an old man pass by them with a plate piled high with food. Percy agreed wholeheartedly, as did his stomach, which started to growl too.

A man's voice called out from inside the truck. "Alright, last call for orders! I'm closing up in ten minutes, if you're in line, stay in line! If you're not, come back tomorrow, I open at noon!" The lights hanging around the truck shut off and a dark skinned hand poked out of the window and shooed a few people away who were trying to sneak in line. They groaned in disappointment but wandered off without too much complaint. It was a good thing they had got there when they did. They were the last ones in line.

Despite what the guy said, it still took about twenty minutes of waiting in line before it was their turn to step up to the window. They were the only ones left around the food truck. A handsome man with short, curly black hair leaned his arms against the edge of the window and greeted them enthusiastically.

"Ahh, my last customers of the day! Hello, hello, what can I get for you fine gentlemen on this beautiful night?" The man asked, his smile genuine. He looked like one of those people who were always in a positive mood, which made Percy instantly like him.

"Is it just you that works here?" Jason asked instead of ordering, looking at the chaotic, orderly mess that was the inside of the food truck.

The man nodded and slapped the outside of his truck a few times. "Yes, this is my baby. Bought her with what I had, fixed her up and now I'm just living my dream. I'm Amaro, by the way." He stuck his out for them to shake and Percy held Jason's bottle for him so he could. When it was his turn he handed the bottle back and introduced them.

"Nice to meet you, I'm Percy, this is Jason." Jason waved. "Oh! And this is Jason's pineapple."

Amaro laughed, “It’s a pleasure to meet you too.” He gave them a subtle once over, gaze lingering on the handcuffs and the pineapple. “Fun night?”

“You could say that.” Jason replied, his scar tugging with the amused smile he gave Amaro. “Didn’t go how we expected, but I think it ended up being better than what we had originally planned.”

“We got married.” Percy said happily, showing off his wedding ring.

Amaro clapped his hands together once, loudly. “Ahhh! Congratulations! Young love,” He said wistfully, “I remember it well.”

“Are you married?” Jason wondered.

The man gazed off behind them for a few seconds. “Aye. I was, once. Didn’t work out. We wanted different things. She wanted to be a lawyer, I wanted to cook falafel and make people happy.” Amaro tsked and shook his head sadly. “She was really very lovely.”

“Oh,” Percy said. “I’m sorry. Why couldn’t you stay together? It doesn’t seem like those two careers would clash much.”

Amaro reached under his counter and pulled up a bottle of beer, popping the top off against the window sill before answering him. “Nah, don’t be sorry. She might have been lovely to look at, but inside she was as venomous as a snake. As violent, too. Took me a long time to see it. I was crushing my dreams so she could live hers, and for what? A few shoves here when she got too mad, a slap there when she had too much to drink.” He drank from his beer. The smell of the thick brew churned Percy’s stomach, it was the exact same brand

Gabe used to drink. Paired with Amaro's vague description of his ex-wife's abuse brought him back to when he was little. It reminded him of why didn't like to drink. It always reminded him of Gabe. Thankfully he had Jason with him tonight to distract him from it, but he still regretted getting drunk a little bit. He just wished he knew why he'd started drinking in the first place…

He was brought out of his thoughts by Amaro's glass tinking against the metal outside of his truck. "Bah, but that's all in the past, eh? Life goes on, and people buy my food, and my ex-wife is probably happy being married to her job somewhere. Or maybe not. Can people with domestic violence charges be a lawyer?"

Jason shrugged. "I don't know. I hope not though. I'm glad you got to live your dream, Amaro. It takes courage to get out of something like a toxic relationship."

Amaro nodded and toasted to that. "Thank you, my friend. I'm much happier here, doing what I love. And I get to make meaningful connections with strangers! There's nowhere else like Vegas in the whole world. So many interesting people drift through here every night, and I get to meet so many fascinating ones. Like you two. What's your story, eh?"

"Oh, well-" Percy started, but Amaro held up a finger.

"Actually, first would you like something to eat? I'll make it while you talk, yeah? My treat. A wedding present, if you will."

Jason scanned the menu for them but when he got to the end he said, "I don't know what to order. I'm not sure I've ever had anything that's on here before." Percy didn't recognize anything either.

“I’ll make you something you’ll like. Trust me?” They nodded and he smiled. “Good, you wont regret it. So, what do you do for a living? You’re not lawyers are you?” He asked menacingly, jokingly pointing the butterknife he was holding at them.

Jason laughed, “Nope, too young for that, I think. We’re, uh…”

“Technically college students.” Percy offered. “But we also do other stuff in the off months.”

“Oh?” Amaro asked, interested. “What are you studying then?”

Percy fiddled with the handcuffs while he answered. He was always self-conscious when he told people his major. Some didn’t take it seriously. It wasn’t anything flashy like a law degree or anything. “I’m going for a Marine Biology major.”

The sound of chopping stopped and he looked up to see Amaro’s eyebrows creeping up his forehead. “No shit? That’s amazing. I don’t think I’ve ever met someone that did that before. Does that mean you’re kinda like a vet but for water creatures?”

“Um, yeah, that’s part of it. There’s a lot more to it, but that’s what I’m focusing on first.” Percy said. Next to him Jason was smiling softly at him.

“That’s impressive, my friend. Will you have the doctor prefix then?” Amaro asked as he resumed his cooking. Jason suddenly looked very interested. Percy hadn’t told his friends this part yet, worried that they’d tease him for it.

He looked forward so he couldn't see Jason's reaction. "Yes. It's a...well the course I'm taking is really long and it's not really something most people do in Marine Biology. Most go for a PhD, which focuses on research and discovering new things about your field but I'm going for the M.D. course. Which is...yeah it's more about the medical aspect of your field, basically. So in about five years you can call me Dr. Jackson-Grace." Jason made a surprised noise in the back of throat while Amaro nodded, impressed.

"You never mentioned that, Percy."

Finally he looked at Jason. He was glad to see that there was no trace of amusement on his face. "I haven't told anyone, actually. I...I don't know, it's kind of silly. Most of you guys are graduating next year, but I'll still be in school."

Jason set his pineapple on the window sill of the truck and pulled him for a hug. In the background Amaro cooed at them while he flipped something on a sizzling skillet. "It isn't silly. Why would you think that? You're serious about this. Eight years of studying isn't anything to be embarrassed about. I'm proud of you, this is really big." He released him and gave him a small kiss on the cheek. Percy tried to ignore the painful pricking that was starting up in his eyes. Jason picked his pineapple back up and bumped him lightly with his shoulder. "I'm not doing anything as impressive as that. Just a degree in the arts. A little architectural design because Annabeth wanted me to take the class with her, but I mostly like drawing and painting."

"Psh, that *is* impressive, Jason. You're really good at drawing, better than anyone I know." He paused for a minute before adding, "Don't tell Rachel I said that, she'll kill me and I've seen what she can do with a hairbrush."

Jason snorted and they fell into a comfortable silence as they watched Amaro finish up his cooking. He placed two plates on the small ledge that jutted out from the window. It looked like they had two tacos on

each plate, but inside the bread-like tortilla three golden orbs of...something sat under some greens and a pale sauce. “So, who’s this Annabeth?”

Percy shuffled nervously, feeling Jason tense up next to him. “She’s my...it’s complicated.” He finished lamely.

“Ah, your ‘it’s complicated’. We’ve all had one of those before, yeah? But you’re here, you’re married now, you’re about to taste the best damn falafel this side of the Pacific Ocean. So whatever Annabeth was to you before you came to Vegas, put it behind you. I say her name and your face turns bitter and angry, yes? I see you look at Jason and your eyes light up and there is always a smile on your lips. So ask yourself this: If one makes you feel alive and one makes you feel dead, which is the better option?”

“Not really an option anymore, is it? I’ve already taken this idiot’s last name.” Percy linked his pinkie through Jason’s affectionately. Jason’s grin would’ve split his face if it could go any wider. “Dr. Jackson-Grace in a few years, remember? I’m not going back now. Not after I know what it’s like.”

“I like the sound of that.” Jason said. “I married a doctor.”

“Well I’m not a doctor yet, I-”

“Oh my gods, does that mean I’m a trophy wife?”

Amaro threw back his head and howled with laughter and Percy couldn’t help but join in with him. Jason’s smile came back and he knew he was just joking. Amaro wiped a tear from his eye and picked his beer up again. “You two are funny guys, I see why you like each other. Now eat up, it’s better hot.”

They set their bottles and the pineapple on the ledge and grabbed the plates. Percy didn't even hesitate before picking up his falafel and taking a bite out of it. It was extremely good and by the look on Jason's face he thought so too. "Mmmm, my gods, this is amazing. What is it?" Percy said in between bites.

"Falafel balls in a pita bread with some lettuce and avocado, drizzled with a yogurt sauce. My mom used to make this for me all the time when I was just a kid, it's my favorite thing to eat, but I've never found someone who could make it as good as she could. Mine's alright, but I wish you could have tasted hers."

"Are you kidding me? This is the best falafel I've ever had!" Jason said, still chewing.

Amaro almost snorted his beer out of his nose. "It's the *only* falafel you've ever had."

Percy nodded. "Mhmm, and now you've ruined every falafel we'll ever potentially eat. Nothing will be the same as Amaro's falafel from Las Vegas. It'll live in my head until the day I die."

"You flatter me, you little charmers. You've got silver tongues and kind hearts. Thank you for this lovely conversation, I can now say I am very pleased to meet you without it being simply a formality. If you're ever in Vegas again, come back and we can go for proper drinks and catch up, yeah?"

"We will definitely be doing that if we ever come back. We'll have to bring Axel, he'd love this." Jason said as he finished off his falafel and dropped his plate into the trash can.

“Axel? Is he, say, about six and a half feet tall, red hair, tattoos, leather jacket?” Amaro leaned on the ledge again, one eyebrow raised.

“Yep, that sounds like him. Why, do you know him?” Percy said, taking a drink of his alcohol without really thinking about it. Jason mirrored him.

Amaro chuckled. “Know him? Everyone on this side of Vegas knows him. He and his bikers take care of us little businesses. They drive away the riff raff and the other gang that likes to try and shake us down for what little extra money we have. They say it’s for ‘protection’ but they really just like causing trouble. The Riders don’t even ask for money, they’re just genuinely good people. It’s the Acolytes that we need protecting from. Axel’s a great guy, comes by here often. My truck’s on the boundary line between the gang’s territories so I get some issues every now and then.”

“Yeah, we ran into the Acolytes earlier, we know they’re dickheads. We kinda got caught up in a spat between them and Axel’s gang. It was this whole big thing, but hopefully they won't be bothering you for a while. Also, if your truck is parked in a bad spot, why not move it?” Jason said.

“Bad spot?” Amaro took a drink of his beer. “This is the best spot in Vegas. I earned the right to park here. The Olympus is one of the busiest hotels, almost everyone staying there comes by this spot. I get business like crazy! The employees frequent my truck too.”

“O-olympus?” Percy wanted to make sure he’d heard him right.

He nodded. “Yep. Right over there, see? The Zeus statue is kind of creepy, no? But he is a small price to pay for being here.” Amaro pointed behind them and they turned to look.

Percy wasn't sure how they hadn't seen it yet. It was an enormous Greek style column and marble building, the size of it staggering. Right out front was a huge fountain with a thirty foot statue of Jason's dad posing nude with a bolt of lightning clenched in his fist. Jason stumbled back a few steps as he took in the imposing figure of Zeus.

"Everything alright?" Amaro sounded concerned.

Jason quickly took a drink of his Aqua Vitae before answering. "Y-yeah, he just...uh, reminds me of my dad."

"Ahhh. In the features or in the way the myths portray Zeus?"

"Both." He said simply. Jason took another drink and Percy hurried to match him.

Amaro yawned and tossed his empty beer bottle into the recycling can. "Then I am sorry for you, my friend. Fathers are another complicated thing, eh? I know mine is." He yawned again and stretched. "I wish I could talk some more with you, but alas I seem to be falling asleep as we speak and I still have to reorganize the inside of my truck. This is farewell for now, but I wish you boys the best. Don't forget about me, eh? Come back when you graduate so I can say I'm friends with a doctor and a famous artist." Amaro winked at them.

They turned their attention back to him to say their goodbyes.

"Thanks for the food, Amaro. And everything else too. We go to college in California so we'll make time to visit." Percy promised.

“Yes, thank you. Have a great night.”

Amaro saluted them and dropped the shutter for his window and they lost sight of him.

“He was nice.” Jason said.

“Yeah… Hey, are you thinking what I’m thinking?” Percy caught Jason’s eye.

An apprehensive look crossed his face but in the end he nodded. “Yep. Let’s go.”

They left Amaro’s food truck and headed towards the Olympus Hotel and Casino. It was a few streets away and they were crossing the second to last one when Jason fisted his hand in the back of his shirt and pulled him out of the way of a speeding golf cart.

“Whoa, careful asshole!” Jason yelled after the cart. Percy put a hand to his racing heart and leaned back against Jason’s chest while he came to terms with the fact that his life was almost ended by a rogue golf cart, of all things. What a heroic death.

The screech of the golf cart’s tires against the pavement as it braked hard got his heart pounding again, but for a different reason. The golf cart reversed wildly, swerving this way and that and they tensed, expecting a fight.

What they weren’t expecting was to see Leo, Frank, and Grover laughing drunkenly and singing along to Lady Gaga. Frank reached over and turned the radio down when they came to a stop in front of

them.

"See! I *told* you guys it was them!" Frank said loudly, as if he was still trying to yell over the music. His pink arm wrap glowed brightly in the night.

"Percy! Percy, hey man there you are. We haven' seen you two sin- *hic* -since the warehouse!" Grover said, one arm slung around Leo's shoulder's while his other one clutched his bottle of Aqua Vitae. He took a long swing off of it and handed it to Frank who did the same, even though his own bottle was sitting in the cup holder.

Leo laughed and ducked out from under Grover's arm as he leaned across both of his passengers and reached his hand out, waving it around frantically. "Oh, Jason! Jason, man I'm so *happy*. You don't eve- *c'mere dammit,"* Dazed, Jason stepped forward and let Leo grab onto his shirt. "Nice pineapple." His eyes flicked over to the handcuffs on Percy's wrist. "Kinky." Leo commented before getting back to what he had originally wanted to say. "Jason, you don' know how great you look-" Frank started giggling and Leo slapped playfully at him with his free hand. "Shut it, Fra- *hic*- Frank, lemme finish."

Frank gasped for breath, fending off Leo's attacking hand. "N-no, I wasn' laughing at *you!* " He stopped talking to let out another peel of laughter. When he could breathe again he said, "I'm so sorry, I jus' saw Grover's head again and I just-" Again he was rocked with laughter. Grover put a hand to his bald head and looked offended for all of about two seconds before he was doubled over with Frank, tears streaming down his face as he tried to hold onto Leo so he didn't fall off their laps.

Leo shushed them, "Shhhhhh, shhh, shhh. S'my turn to talk!" When the other two quieted down enough so he could be heard, he continued. "You don't know how great you look next to him." Leo pointed at Percy. "An' I'm happy that you're happy. An' now that you've abandoned me and gotten married, and Percy's abandoned

Grover, him and I have decided to be best friends. *Isn' that neat!"*

Percy stifled a snort. "We didn't abandon you guys. You're still my best friend, Grover."

Jason rolled his eyes. "And you called *me* dramatic," He said to Percy. "Leo, you are such a dork. *And* way too drunk to be driving."

"Nuh-uh." Leo protested, heaving himself up into a sitting position so he was behind the wheel again. "I'm just drunk enough *to* drive." He said wisely.

"That...made no sense." Percy told him.

"Hey, lay off him, you guys." Frank piped up, "If you two can get drunk and marry each other then I think it's perfectly alright tha' Leo can oper...opera... *drive* a moped vehicle."

"Motor," Grover corrected him. "And don' worry, Percy. I'm like, forty somethin'. I'm a responsible adult, I'm super- *hic* -vising." Grover said, one eyelid drooping as he grabbed his bottle back from Frank and tipped it upside down, pouring alcohol into his open mouth.

"Tha's not how that works, I'm almost positive." Jason said. "Leo, give me the keys."

"Why? You wanna ride? OOOHHHHHH!" Leo's mouth turned into a perfect circle as he turned to address Frank and Grover. He dropped his voice into what he thought was a whisper, but was still plenty loud. "Do you guys think they would want to *come with us?"*

Frank gasped and nodded furiously while Grover pumped his fist in the air. “Leo, you are a genius.” Frank told him before focusing on Percy and Jason. “You guys wanna come?”

Jason turned a worried eye to Percy. “Uh, where are you going?”

Frank put a hand over his mouth and started giggling. Grover had to answer for him. “Okay, so we were playing Grand Theft Auto in the game room, right? And well you can do this thing where you use objects as ramps and do really cool jumps.” Percy did not like where this conversation was going. “So *I* bet Frank thirty bucks that Leo could do it in real life.”

Frank stopped giggling long enough to say, “And *I* bet Grover forty bucks that Leo could land the jump perfectly.” That wasn’t really how opposing bets worked, but Percy didn’t mention it.

Leo shrugged. “I took th’ challenge. On the way outta the casino we saw the valet had lef’ the keys to the golf cart in the engine so we...borrowed it for a bit. I did a few mods on it and this puppy’s got some serious juice now.” Leo patted his trusty tool belt proudly.

Percy needed a drink. Luckily he had one in his hand. Jason took a drink with him, as per their agreement. It probably wasn’t the best idea because immediately his head started to swim and blinked a few times to try and fuse the two golf carts he saw together. “W-wha’ are you guys gonna jump?”

Leo’s smile turned absolutely devilish. “Only the biggest ramp *in* this city.” He steepled his hands together, his long fingers forming a sloping point. When they didn’t guess it he rolled his eyes and threw his hand up, bumping them against the canvas roof of the cart. “The

Luxor! Giant glass pyramid? Ringin' any bells?"

Next to him, Jason laughed. "That cart's not gonna make it up the side of the Luxor."

"Oh, he doubts us." Grover tutted. "Never doubt the mind of Leo Valdez! What do you think he suped it up for?"

"I'm hurt, Jason. You doubt my skills?" He sniffed indignantly. "And after I was a witness to your wedding, too. Well tha's alright, cuz my *other* friends support me. Let's go, boys. Mr. and Mr. Hypocrite can walk." With that Leo flipped a switch that was zip tied to the roof support and floored the gas pedal. They shot off into the night impossibly fast. Over the sound of their whooping and hollering, Percy heard the bass of a Lady Gaga song get louder as Frank turned the radio back up.

Jason watched the taillights disappear around the corner of a building. "Those three are going to get themselves killed."

"Or someone else."

Jason nodded and took a drink from his bottle. "Or that."

Percy swallowed his mouthful of cookie flavored alcohol and said, "C'mon. Nothin' we can do about it now and they probably won't even make it a quarter of the way up, if they even manage to get the cart onto the pyramid."

Jason followed him across the street he had tried to cross before, then over the next one until they were both standing at the edge of the

fountain. Percy was surprised to find that it was saltwater. He didn't touch it, worried it would try to heal him and chase away the effects of all the alcohol he'd consumed tonight. He wasn't sure he was ready to be sober yet. Percy put a hand on the rim of the fountain and let the water's calming presence sooth him.

Jason poked his finger in the water and swished it around. "Saltwater."

"Mhmm." Percy hummed, lulled into a sense of peacefulness by the proximity of his element.

"Sure says something, doesn't it?"

Percy hadn't realized he'd closed his eyes until he had to open them to look at his husband. "What do you mean?"

"Well, the whole," He gestured to the fountain and statue set up in general. "My dad, standing in a fountain. A *saltwater* fountain, which symbolizes *your* dad. It gives off the 'lording my power over yours' vibe, you know? Like Z- *the statue* is saying he's better than who the fountain represents. Just another power play."

Percy leaned back and gave the set up a critical once over. Now that he was looking for it, it was easy to spot. The symbolism plain as day, Zeus over Poseidon, Hades underneath them both. "Yeah, I see it now. Just makes me glad we got the tattoos we did. It gives me a sense of satisfaction seeing them forced together forever."

Jason sat his bottle on the edge of the fountain and linked his fingers with Percy's free hand. He raised them both up. "A union between the age-old rivalry. Whether they like it or not. This was our decision, and they can't do anything about it. They didn't even show up to our

wedding, so fuck ‘em, I say.”

He squeezed his hand in solidarity, the handcuffs resting against Jason’s arm. “Some fathers they are. Lousy parental figures, just like the rest of them.”

“Yeah, I didn’t even meet my dad until I was *sixteen!”*

“What an asshole. My dad’s not so bad, honestly, but it’d be nice to see him more often.”

“Your dad scares the crap out of me.” Jason admitted, his lips twitching up at the corner.

Percy let their hands fall, his other one setting down his bottle so he could fiddle with the cuffs again. He should really figure out how to get these off soon. To Jason he said. “Well he’s technically your father-in-law so you might want to get used to him. I don’t see him that often, but he *does* visit and you’re bound to be there when it happens.” He eyed the water in the fountain, smelling the salt wafting off of it. Maybe if he…

Jason shuddered, rubbing away the goosebumps that dotted his arms. “Ugh, don’t remind me. That means my dad is yours too. Talk about problematic in-laws.”

“Mhmm,” He said, still distracted by his idea. “Hey, Jason, I want to try something okay? Don’t freak out.”

“What, why would I-OH MY GODS, WHAT THE FUCK!” Jason yelled as he watched Percy grab his thumb and dislocate it’s joint. “Percy

what are you doing! Jesus Christ, *stop!"*

Percy grunted as the dull pain throbbed through his hand. “Almost done.” He said through gritted teeth. Jason looked like he might lose his falafel at any minute but he didn’t stop him. Percy took a deep breath and adjusted his grip on the locked cuff. “You might not want to watch this.” He warned, but Jason kept his horrified eyes fixed on the scene. In one sharp tug, he pulled the handcuff up and over his hand, his disjointed thumb making it much easier to slip off, but his skin still split and tore, blood rushing alarmingly fast over his hand. He held up the bloody cuffs triumphantly. “Freedom at last.”

Jason grabbed his injured arm by the elbow and thrust it into the saltwater. Percy willed the water to heal only his thumb and skin. He half expected it not to work but his head still swam with a drunken haze while his skin knit back together and his thumb popped back into place. When he was sure it was fully healed he tugged and Jason released his grip on his elbow, letting him pull it out.

“You absolute lunatic, why didn’t you just *cut* them off with Riptide?” Blue eyes roamed over him, checking for any other injuries.

Through the fog in his brain he registered the weight of his ever present pen in his pocket. “Oh. Didn’t think about it. This worked just fine.” He clipped one side of the handcuffs around his belt loop.

“You de-skinned your hand!”

Percy took a drink, prompting Jason to do the same, letting the rush of a fresh wave of intoxication lift his spirits. “Eh, doesn’ hurt any more.” He leaned forwards and kissed Jason.

This close to the saltwater his senses were on overdrive, the feeling of

every slide of their lips, every brush of skin was increased tenfold. Jason took control of the kiss and Percy let him, backing up until the waist high marble rim of the fountain bumped against his back. They blindly set their bottles on it and Percy freed his hands from Jason's hair long enough to push himself up so he was sitting next to their bottles. Jason slotted himself between Percy's legs, his arms wrapping around him, their chests brushing together.

Percy slipped his hands under Jason's shirt, feeling the warm skin tense and twitch under his light touch. How he was always so warm baffled him. He was constantly producing heat, almost as if the electricity he could control was living just beneath his skin, coursing through his veins, waiting to be let loose. Dangerous and volatile, Jason was a living lightning bolt and Percy was the ocean. Like electricity when it hits water, their energies boosted each other. Percy took whatever Jason gave him and amplified it. When Jason touched him he felt like a conduit, his blood surging through his veins, the hair on the back of his neck standing up. He could get drunk on this feeling alone, no need for the alcohol.

Thunder rumbled high in the cloudless sky and Jason jerked his head up, breathing heavily, eyes wide. "That wasn't me." He whispered.

"Oh fu-" Behind him, the water in the fountain sloshed violently, a particularly rebellious wave splashed up and drenched them both. Jason gasped at the sudden shock of cold water. Percy sat there feeling the water trickle down the back of his neck, regardless of the fact that he had tried to will himself dry when the wave surged up. "That wasn't me, either." He said.

Jason looked nervously at the fountain and statue. "I guess they don't really appreciate us making out here." To emphasize that fact, another clap of thunder boomed overhead and the water sloshed again, this time staying in the fountain. Pedestrians looked up in confusion before hurrying about their business.

Percy flipped the sky off and pulled Jason down for another kiss. The sky went deathly quiet and the water in the fountain stilled it's movement until its surface was glassy smooth. The anger was palpable, but Percy didn't care. Why should he live his life by what the gods did and didn't like.

Jason came up for air, his blond hair plastered to his forehead. He smiled. "Fuck 'em, right?"

"Fuck 'em." He agreed. "Shitty fathers don't get a say in what we do." He twisted in Jason's arms so he could see the statue's face. "You hear that, Zeus? Fuck off!" The air charged with an intense amount of electricity before it slowly died down. A warning. Do it again and he'd get fried.

Jason flipped the water off. "You too, Poseidon." A shoot of water erupted from the fountain and tried to hit him in the face but he dodge and it splashed harmlessly against the pavement behind him. "That the best you got?" He mocked.

They'd evoked their names, there was no going back. A little revenge against the gods was exactly what they needed right now. Percy picked up their bottles and handed Jason's to him and they took a long drink. As he pulled the bottle away from his face he felt it get heavier as it refilled itself. Good old Dionysus, making sure the party never stopped.

"Mmmm," Percy kissed the side of Jason's neck and let his free hand wander around to the front of his jeans, feeling the outline of Jason's half hard cock through them. Jason leaned his forehead against Percy's shoulder and sighed in pleasure, his heart rate picking up.

Suddenly, Percy had a great idea. He took his hand away and Jason whined. He gave him a small peck on the lips. "Later, I promise. Right

now I want to piss your dad off some more."

Jason groaned and said, "I hate that I agree with that." He stood up straight and pushed his wet hair off his forehead. They were already beginning to dry off in the warm desert night. "What's the plan?"

Percy grinned and heaved himself into a standing position on the edge of the fountain. "Just watch and see." Jason took his bottle for him.

He turned around and looked down at the water, willing it to behave. He took a step forwards and placed his foot on top of it and thankfully it held. His other foot joined and then he was standing on top of the water. He got a few odd looks from the passerby but most of them didn't seem to find it that strange.

He started across the fountain. Halfway there he threw a look over his shoulder at Jason. "Are you staring at my ass?"

"No." Jason said, clearly staring at his ass. He met his eyes and grinned. "Okay, yes."

"Pervert," He teased before turning back to his task. When he got to the base of the statue he had to pull himself up onto its elevated base.

He cracked his knuckles and stared up at the monumental marble monstrosity, trying to ignore the exposed dick and balls. The statue was technically naked, but it had a carved stone cloth that billowed around him. It came off his shoulders and wrapped around his torso where it continued down to twine around his left leg. It was probably meant to be sensual and lewd, but to him it just came off as looking like Zeus was trying to fight his way out of loose bed sheets. All in all, it made for very convenient handholds.

It was surprisingly easy to climb. All the way up he called Zeus every name imaginable and some he made up on the spot. Below him he could hear Jason doing the same thing to the water in the fountain. He reached up and went to grab a hold of the next fold of cloth but instead grabbed onto something much more unpleasant.

He tore his hand away from Zeus's rock hard (literally) carved marble dick in disgust. He found a fold of cloth and hauled himself up further, vowing to himself to never reveal to anyone else that he'd touched the king of the gods' marble cock. The thought alone made him shudder, but what was worse was the fact that he was now eye-level with it. He tried not to look at it but it was hard when it was an inch from his face.

"Your dad has a small dick!" He called down to Jason.

"So does yours!" His husband hollered up.

Percy turned his head to look down so fast he got dizzy. "When have you *ever* seen my dad's *dick?"*

Jason's peal of laughter floated up to him. "Bologna!"

"Baloney?!"

"Italy. Bologna, Italy! There's a statue of your dad there!" Jason explained. To anyone else they probably sounded crazy.

Percy shook his head and continued his arduous task of climbing. If

Jason had seen it in Italy it must have been when he and Annabeth were trudging through hell, which was not something he wanted to think about so he pushed it from his mind. Zeus's pebbled nipple wasn't as bad as his dick had been, thankfully, and soon after that he was able to pull himself up and sit on his shoulder.

The view from up here was...impressive to say the least. It certainly wasn't the tallest thing in Vegas but he could see a fair distance away, the city stretched out like a shining jewel in the middle of a brown desert. Far below, Jason's blond hair glowed in the lights from the casino.

"What now!" Jason cupped his hands around his mouth so his voice carried. Percy noticed a few pedestrians stopping to see what Percy was doing up here.

Percy didn't answer him, and instead shuffled around so he was straddling the side of Zeus's neck. He reached in his pocket and felt his pen and then reached a little deeper and found the spare sharpie Axel had given him earlier. He pulled it out and brandished it like a sword at the gigantic face, uncapping it menacingly.

He took a breath and prayed to Apollo to give him some artistic help and then got to work. The black lines stood out starkly against the white marble. A few lines here, two circles, a couple of veins there. It was no Picasso, but it was definitely the best looking dick and balls he'd ever drawn. It might have helped matters that it was strewn across Zeus's cheek, but that was irrelevant. Jason's echoing laughter reached him again and he smiled, loving the sound of it.

Percy directed his middle finger towards the sky once again and issued his challenge. "Fight me, you cowardly dickhead, you piece of shit, you're a horrible father!"

He had about a point zero-two second warning when the night sky lit up like a fireworks display. Then an immense bolt of pure, unbridled godly rage struck from the heavens. Every hair on his body stood on end. It was like when Jason touched him but magnified to godly proportions. Percy did the smartest thing he could think to do. In what seemed like slow motion, he got to his feet and did an elegant swan dive off of the statue. If he had been anybody else the impact with the water alone would probably kill him, and as it was he half expected his father to take control of the water and force it to disobey him.

He fell and fell, feeling the energy surge turn and follow him. He got another eyeful of godly cock as he whooshed past it, the stone phallus illuminated by what he could only assume was Zeus's homing lightning bolt locked onto him. The water came up fast and he used all of his power to will it to catch him. It surged up and, still in slow motion, he watched Jason thrust his hand out and *pull* the lightning bolt towards him. The pure white light it gave off cast Jason's face into an almost exact pale replica of the statue. The last thing that went through his mind before the water caught him was: whoever carved this statue must have met Jupiter in person because it really did look like him.

The water broke his fall like it was a mound of soft feather down, but then it immediately spat him back out on the rim of the fountain next to Jason. Okay, so his dad was most definitely still mad, but at least he didn't want him dead.

Jason was breathing hard, his electric eyes vibrant, the air around him tense with energy. They looked at each other and then broke out laughing. Thunder cracked again and the water in the fountain gurgled. He was worried until he realized the water was *laughing with them.* Another bolt struck, but this time it purposefully hit the laughing water. Poseidon was amused. Still mad, but definitely tickled pink at the vandalization of his brother's statue.

The crowd that had gathered around them started clapping, most likely thinking it was some kind of street magic act. Jason bowed to them and Percy curtsied. The crowd went wild.

The sky rumbled another warning and in the distance the screech of police sirens started up. Jason took his hand and they hopped off the fountain. “Uh-oh, time to go, bro.” Jason said, scooping up their bottles and putting the caps back on them.

Percy gave him a quick kiss and took his bottle from him so he could grab his pineapple. “Yep. let’s scram.”

The crowd helpfully parted for them and they took off just as the red and blue lights from the squad car washed over Zeus’s dick-y face.

Motion Pictures

Chapter Notes

So! Here's the next chapter aaaaand guess what? It's actually proof read and beta'd! The lovely, wonderful NinjaSpyWizard is amazing and offered to edit for me when he can. I literally do not know how you all suffered through my fics without him, because he is an immense help I certainly noticed a difference in just this chapter alone. So thank you again NinjaSpyWizard! <3

-Back To The Present- *Argo II* Dining Room-

Jason's POV

The first thing he saw when he came back from the memory was Percy's face. His eyes were open and staring at him. Jason stared back, turning over what he'd just seen. It certainly wasn't the worst memory they'd relived since waking up that morning, although the thought of how pissed off they'd made their fathers put a sour pit of anxiety in his stomach. The one consolation he had was that he knew if Zeus actually wanted them dead, they would be by now. At least Poseidon seemed more amused than angry, despite the fact that Jason had called him a horrible father at least four different times.

They had definitely toed the line in the blasphemy department last night. Percy's hilarious idea to draw a dick on the statue had earned him an actual strike from Zeus. Jason was just lucky his father hadn't sent a full strength lightning bolt, otherwise he wouldn't have been able to save Percy. It had definitely been strong and would have hurt *a lot* if it had actually connected with Percy, but it wasn't enough to kill him, which surprised him considering how much his father hated his nephew.

Percy blinked.

“They’re back!” Leo said, dropping the fork he was just about to place on top of his utensil sculpture. “You guys don’t know how creepy it is when you do that.” The others paused their various conversations to turn their attention back to them.

Percy pushed himself off the tabletop, absently rubbing at the red mark on his cheek from where his face had hit the wood. He pulled his plate of pancakes back over and stabbed at them with his syrup covered fork. “Ugh, these are cold. How long were we out?” He asked.

Coach Hedge checked his watch. “About half an hour.”

Jason groaned and dropped his head into his hands after sitting back up. “This sucks.”

“Hey, Leo?” Percy said.

“Yeah?”

“How far up the Luxor did you guys get?”

Jason’s laugh was muffled by his palms and he lifted his head to see Leo’s reaction. His best friend scowled. “We didn’t. I told you we crashed into it.”

Frank rubbed the back of his neck self-consciously. “Yeah we, uh, didn’t see the guard rail around the bottom. Apparently we weren’t the first ones to try and get onto it.” Frank awkwardly looked over at Grover. “You still owe me thirty dollars, by the way. You know, since Leo never made the jump…” Grover gave him a dirty look, robotically pulling his wallet out of his pocket to hand the money over.

Percy nudged his knee under the table as he impaled his cold pancakes again. “Told you they’d never make it up.”

Jason felt the corner of his lips twitch up and he rolled his eyes. To Leo he said, “Wait so you guys remembered that part of the night?”

Grover nodded, slipping his wallet back into his pocket, and answered instead. “Yeah, I just remembered it a few minutes ago.”

“How long were you out for?” He asked.

Grover’s face twisted up in confusion, and Leo and Frank both raised their eyebrows. “We didn’t black out like you guys, it just...came back.”

Percy picked up his cup of orange juice and sat back in his chair, crossing a leg over his knee. Jason had to force himself to look away, feeling the phantom pressure of those long, elegant legs wrapped around his waist. Percy took no notice of his internal struggle, peacefully sipping his drink.

“That’s extremely unfair.” Percy said after swallowing a few mouthfuls of juice. “Why do we pass out like a couple of fainting Victorian ladies every few minutes, but the rest of you are just fine?”

Nico shrugged and took a drink from his own cup. “Who knows? More importantly though, I know what Will and I bought those eggs for.”

“Oh?” Jason said.

Nico took another sip from his cup and mumbled into the rim of it, “We nutmegged the notice.”

Jason felt his forehead scrunch up in confusion. “You did what? I can’t understand you when you’ve got your face in your cup.”

Nico cleared his throat and set his cup down. “Begged the boat us.” He mumbled again. Jason still had no idea what he was trying to say.

Percy apparently did because he almost shot orange juice out of nose when he started laughing. It reminded him of Amaro. He coughed a few times, trying to expel the liquid from his lungs. “You *egged* the *Lotus?”*

Will put an arm around his boyfriends small shoulders and pulled him close, a grin on his face. Nico tried to act like he was annoyed by it but his face softened as it always did around him. “Yep.” Will said, “At least until security came out and called the cops. Then we went back to the bar to get Coach Hedge and give you two the-”

“Eggs.” Jason finished for him.

Will rolled his eyes, probably tired of Jason interrupting him today. “Yes, eggs.”

Percy was nodding slowly at Nico, looking impressed. “Hell yeah, Nico. I wish I had been there. Was it as satisfying as it sounds?”

Nico chewed on his bottom lip a moment before answering, a small

smile breaking through. “Yeah, it really was.” Percy held a fist out and Nico bumped it with his own. “It was technically Will’s idea but I loved it. To be honest, I was kinda nervous to go back there at first, but it wasn’t that bad.”

Jason knew about Nico’s seventy year stint in the Lotus Casino. Anybody who knew him did, how could they not? Percy, Grover, and Annabeth had also spent a few days there back on their first quest, although that was nothing compared to the trauma Nico must have received from being stuck in there for so long. Whatever closure he had gotten from doing something as simple as throwing a few cartons of eggs at the casino, Jason was glad he had it. Nico used to have the same look talking about the Lotus that Thalia did whenever she got too close to a pine tree. Now though that tense, apprehensive mood was absent from his face. He looked like a huge weight had been lifted off his chest, like he was finally free from the oppressive, Lotus shaped shadow that had clung to him. Jason was proud of his friend and he was happy that he’d found someone like Will, who always seemed to know just what to do to help him. Those two argued over the silliest things, but he half suspected they did it just because they enjoyed the banter. They reminded him of an old married couple, which was simultaneously sweet and hilarious considering the fact that, even though Nico had the body and mindset of an eighteen year old, he was technically around ninety.

Nico had come a long way from the boy who had been forcibly outed in front of him by Cupid all those years ago.

“Anyways, enough about that. What did you guys just see?” Nico asked, bringing the subject back around to the new memory. “Or is this another one of the ‘we don’t have to tell you’ things?” He added with a sly glance up at Will.

“No, it was just Percy actively pursuing his death wish by pissing off my father once again. And the best damn falafel on this side of the Pacific ocean.” Jason didn’t mention what Percy had told him about pursuing a doctorate in marine bio studies. That was something Percy had trusted him with and it wasn’t his to share. *Dr. Jackson-Grace.* He

still got a thrill up his spine when he thought about it. Despite Percy's obvious reluctance in telling Jason about it last night, he couldn't quite hide the excitement that had sparkled in his eyes as he talked about his career. Jason couldn't remember the last time Percy did something wholly for himself, just because he liked it.

Percy sighed dreamily and looked off into the distance. "Those really were good falafel."

"Is that all? You just vandalized the statue and got food?" Leo asked.

"Pretty much, yeah." Jason answered him. "We spent a while talking to the food truck owner, Amaro. Great guy, knows the biker from our hotel room, actually. And of course we talked to you when you drove by. Didn't know you were such a good singer, Frank."

Frank sat back and crossed his arms. "I'm not." He said simply. Jason decided to leave it at that, the firm set of Frank's lips telling him he didn't want to talk about his secret penchant for belting out pop songs.

"I disagree," Grover said. "Sounded pretty good to me." Leo nodded in affirmation.

Frank huffed and ran a hand through his cropped hair. "Thanks."

"Oh, we also figured out how we got the handcuffs." Percy said, saving Frank from his awkward situation. "Well, kinda. I almost got arrested."

"That's nothing new, Percy. You're always on the verge of getting

arrested." Jason joked. Some of the others snickered while Percy slapped him in the arm lightly with the back of his hand.

"Well thankfully you were there to get me out of trouble, then." He responded dryly.

Leo spoke up from behind his fork sculpture. "Someone's got to since Annabeth isn't here to-" He snapped his mouth shut, realizing what he'd just said. Who he'd just brought up. Leo's eyes were wide and apologetic, but the mood of the room still went sour.

Percy's jaw clenched tightly as his face shuttered closed, his knuckles white on the grip he had around his cup. Jason's stomach twisted painfully at the unexpected reminder of the unintentional victims of their drunken night. He dreaded their return to camp, when they'd have to face the girls and tell them what they'd done. He could picture how angry Annabeth would be at Percy and most definitely at Jason. Rightfully so. He *did* fuck her boyfriend twice, after all. And certainly not in the way she ever has before, that's for sure.

Percy had told him about the scheduled, timely slots that Annabeth had set aside for their sexual activities. It made a little sense what with their busy college lives and everything, but he also told him that she stuck to that schedule even in the summer months. Jason had found it strange, but it wasn't unheard of.

He recalled one of the times he had stayed the night in Percy's dorm after a homework session had run later than they thought it would. The fact they had binge watched a movie series afterwards might have also contributed to it, but it was a Friday night and they didn't have anything planned the next day. Or so they thought. Percy had forgotten that Annabeth had scheduled sex for that morning. Talk about an awkward encounter. They had woken up to her standing at the foot of Percy's bed, looking down at them with a raised eyebrow, their half empty popcorn bucket sitting on one side of the bed, miraculously unspilled. Percy was sprawled over his chest like he

usually ended up when they had sleepovers. He got cold easily and said that Jason radiated heat like a fireplace.

Annabeth had cleared her throat and Percy shot upright, blinking sleep from his eyes, his hair wild and half sticking up. *Annabeth?...Oh shit, was that today? Sorry, I forgot…,* he'd told her. She had said nothing, only raised her other eyebrow and Jason watched as Percy molded himself into Percy Jackson, Annabeth's Boyfriend. It always irked him when he saw his friend slip into a past version of himself just for her benefit.

Percy had turned to look at him with a tight lipped smile. *Hey, man, sorry but would you mind-*

Don't even worry about it, I'm already gone, he'd replied, throwing the blanket off and pulling on his shirt. Annabeth's cool grey eyes tracked his movements with interest as he got up from the bed. He left the pajama pants he'd borrowed from Percy on and scooped his jeans up from the back of the couch. Annabeth was on Percy's lap before Jason even had a chance to close the door behind him. The last thing he saw was a pair of green eyes locked onto him before a waterfall of blonde curls blocked his view and then the door latched.

Sometimes Jason didn't really understand the big hype everyone made about sex. Sure it felt nice and you got to be extremely close to the person you cared about and it gave him a sense of satisfaction to be able to give pleasure to Piper in that way, but...it felt like a chore a lot of the time. Like he had to force himself to get into it. Their first time had been very awkward and took a long time for him to finish. Back then he just assumed all first times were like that, but then it never really changed. For a while he wondered if he simply didn't enjoy sex, but when he was by himself he had no problem whatsoever giving in to the pleasure.

Piper had noticed something was off. *Is...is it me?* , she'd asked him once, eyes wide and scared that he'd confirm her fears. He assured her

that it wasn't her fault. He'd told her that he was fine, nothing was wrong. To himself he'd vowed to try harder and it actually did get better...when he closed his eyes and concentrated on nothing else but the feeling of her wrapped around him. He was...usually not the one to initiate intercourse. He just had a low sex drive.

Inadvertently, his eyes wandered over to the man beside him, his thoughts straying to last night, to the fevered, almost frantic way they'd gone at it. Jason hadn't had any issues then, his brain had been on the one-track sex expressway. It had been exhilarating, Percy returning everything Jason gave him, taking control for a bit and playfully teasing him. Even through the preparation process he had been insanely turned on, never once having to think of something else to keep going. Especially when-

No. He wiped his sweaty palms on his pants, forcing himself not to think about it. Last night was a fluke. They'd both had an absurd amount of alcohol of various types, so it probably wasn't even as good as he remembered it to be.

You weren't drunk this morning when you got on your knees for him, a small voice inside him said, *when you pinned him against the tiles and kissed him.*

Internally, Jason screamed. It didn't make him feel any better but it drowned out that voice until he couldn't hear it anymore.

"You alright, dude?" Leo's voice pulled him from his thoughts. He looked up to his friend. "You look...like you're gonna be sick." Vaguely Jason registered that the conversation had gone on around him while he had been pondering...whatever the fuck his brain was trying to tell him. Percy no longer had the same tense air about him and the mood of the room had eased considerably.

“Yeah...yeah, no I’m fine, sorry. Just...hungry.” He said, hoping that they would believe it. A quick glance over at Percy instantly told him that his husband did not buy his excuse. *Husband? Fuck, Jason, knock it off,* he told himself. His ring weighed heavy on his finger.

Luckily the others accepted his explanation and didn’t question him further.

“Alright, so then eat, kid. I want to see the looks on your faces when you see what’s in that album!” Coach Hedge said, pushing a new plate towards him. Hedge suspiciously had a crumb strewn plate sitting next to him and Jason realized his carefully constructed sandwich had been commandeered. Percy had asked him once why didn’t just summon a fully made one, but Jason had been too embarrassed to tell him that the calming ritual of putting all of the ingredients together himself helped ease his anxiety and gave him a sense of peace. Instead, he’d told him some bullshit story about it tasting better.

Now he mourned his lost lunch. Jason debated summoning the ingredients again but he didn’t have the heart to go through the effort again. Resolved, he pulled the empty plate the rest of the way across the table and watched it manifest his food out of thin air.

Percy stared longingly at the falafel tacos on his plate, absently massacring his own syrup drenched cold pancakes. Jason picked one of the tacos up and slid his plate over to Percy who hesitated only a fraction of a second before picking up the other taco on it.

“Thanks.” he said. They didn’t mention the fact that Percy easily could have gotten his own empty plate. Jason ignored the strange looks the others gave them, it wasn’t like this was the first time him and Percy had shared food.

Jason swallowed his bite of falafel. “Yep. Definitely not as good as

Amaro's, though. We were right." Percy nodded sadly as he chewed on his.

The second they had finished their lunch Will picked up the album and dropped in the middle of the table. This time it was Jason's turn to flinch from the sound. He kind of dreaded opening that book, hesitant to get sucked into yet *another* memory today.

He put a hand on the cover so no one else could open it. "Okay, here's the deal. We look at this long enough for *one* memory to come back, and then after that we wait until tomorrow for the next one. Got it?"

" *What?* That's it?" Nico started to argue.

"Yes, Nico," Percy said, "It's really disorienting getting thrown back and forth. It's going to make me sick if I have to do it much longer. It's more nauseating than you would think."

"Fine, but we're doing it again after breakfast tomorrow. Our memories could be in there too."

Jason rolled his eyes. "Okay, deal. Let's...get this over with then." Percy scooted his chair closer to him and the rest of their friends crowded around behind them so they didn't have to look at it upside down.

With a deep breath, he flipped the cover open.

The next page was a title page, the top reading *Jason and Percy Jackson-Grace.* Under that was a picture that took up almost the whole page. It was a photo of the two of them standing at what he could

only assume was the altar from the chapel they got married in. Curiously enough, they were not wearing the wedding dresses from the cover photo. Both him and Percy were clad in fine cut black tuxedos, complete with ties, jackets, vests, and black leather dress shoes. Jason's tux in the picture matched Percy's in everything but the blue tie he sported. Percy looked handsomely striking in his black tux and dark green silk tie, the jacket hugging his frame attractively. He looked better in this suit than he had in the one from his mom's wedding, to which Jason had accompanied him because Annabeth and Piper had been on a mission at the time.

Nico gave a teasing wolf whistle when he saw the page. The picture had obviously been taken right when they'd kissed after their vows because in it Percy had both hands resting on Jason's waist while Jason had one hand on Percy's lower back, his other cradling the side of his face that was turned away from the camera. Their lips were slotted together and their eyes were closed softly. Percy's wedding ring glinted on his finger, bright against the black of Jason's tux jacket.

The cover of the album lifted off the table and began to close as Jason reactively tried to shut it to hide the tender moment this picture had captured. He only got it up about an inch off the table when he was rudely jostled forward as Nico leaned over him and smacked the cover back down. Jason had to quickly take his hand back or risk getting it slammed into the wood.

"Nuh uh uh, no chickening out, Gra... *Jackson-Grace."* The smirk on Nico's face carried over into the teasing tone of his voice. "Don't be embarrassed, we've seen this already, along with the other five hundred times you two sucked face last night. Just get it over with. You'll be glad when you do." Jason grumbled but Nico's hand stayed where it was, holding the book open.

From somewhere behind him, Leo gasped. "Guys, look! It's moving…" Jason half worried Leo was still drunk, but when he looked back down at the picture it was indeed moving.

Percy leaned forward to get a closer view. “What the fuck?”

“Ohhhh, this is gonna be good!” Coach Hedge said, rubbing his hands together.

The picture slowly animated, their lips moving against each other, Percy tilting his head up for a better angle, a hint of a blush rising around Jason’s cheeks. His hand on Percy’s lower back pulled him closer. The flash of a few cameras flickered over them, but they didn’t seem like they noticed anything else in that room at that moment. One of the out of view guests must have hollered something because they broke apart, looking slightly embarrassed. Percy’s face was set in a wide grin, his white teeth on full display, and Jason’s own face smiled shyly out over the audience. They turned to face the crowd and a few more camera flashes went off before their smiling faces jolted into startled expressions as a small black and grey blur ran into the picture and tackled them both, almost knocking them over.

The Jason and Percy in the picture laughed and hugged Thalia back as she cried into the front of their tuxedos, her small arms wrapped around them both as far as they could go. The picture shook and blurred over completely before it switched to a different angle, the new direction showing a sobbing Axel, sporting a fresh looking broken nose, hastily shoving his phone into his pocket in the front row of the audience. The biker became a large smear before clearing up as he hopped onto the altar and wrapped his arms around all three of them and lifted them off of their feet. A few others from the crowd took that as their cue to swarm them too. Jason recognized Apollo giving them both pats on the back and wiping a tear from his eye before moving out of the way for a lady in a gaudy southern belle type dress to give them both kisses on the forehead. Jason’s stomach filled with ice as he recognized the lady as *his girlfriend’s mom.* Aphrodite smoothed Percy’s hair off his forehead and pinched Jason’s cheek before she too stepped off the altar.

Behind them a man in a sparkly white jumpsuit and an elaborate

pompadour hairstyle tucked a book under one arm so he could clap enthusiastically before slipping a flask out from his jumpsuit and taking a drink off it. Next to him, Grover and Leo held onto each other as they sobbed just as hard as Axel had appeared to. Grover still had his head of fluffy brown curls. In the background, two adult men in clashing tuxes hurried by and slipped out of the emergency exit door without looking back once. Something about the older men seemed familiar to him somehow but he just couldn't place why. The picture blacked out and reset itself to the still of them kissing before it slowly animated on it's loop again.

"I...Is that...that's *Elvis!"* Leo said, pointing to the pompadour man in the sparkly suit.

" *Fuck* Elvis, Leo! Bigger problems here!" Percy said, his voice edging into panic mode.

Jason's heart felt like it was crawling up his throat. "Elvis doesn't matter because *that's Piper's mom."* He waited until the picture looped back around to Aphrodite, putting his finger over her.

Will sucked a breath in through his teeth and said, "Yiiiiikes," drawing out the I. It did nothing to reassure him.

"Oh yeah, almost forgot she showed up." Coach Hedge said offhandedly, letting out a large burp. He took a bite off his newly empty coke can and chewed before speaking again. "Real sweet lady. Blessed the union with Hera."

Jason didn't realize he was on the verge of hyperventilating until Percy's soothing hand found his knee. The touch helped ground him and he was able to pull himself back.

“Do...do you think she told Piper?” Percy asked him, worriedly biting his lip.

“I don’t know. Aphrodite is…”

“Unpredictable?” Frank offered.

“Yeah. That.”

Hedge watched them silently, his eyes oddly intense for the energetic satyr. He caught Jason watching him and looked away, resuming his consumption of the aluminum can. Percy stared in mute horror as the love goddess once again followed Apollo across the altar to congratulate them. A glance up showed Nico’s face set into a carefully unreadable expression.

Jason made the decision and flipped the page, turning to the next one. They hadn’t gotten sucked into a memory yet so he doubted it would happen from that picture. The room was silent as the page fluttered down, hiding the first picture. The next page was just blank, no pictures, no picture holders, so he turned that one too.

Facing up at them was one page with four different pictures on it. The other page in the spread was blank with some kind of wax paper covering it, most likely to protect the pictures integrity. Percy sighed and inched the book closer so they could see the smaller photos.

The top left one was of Leo and Frank paused in the action of trying to pull Percy and Jason apart as they kissed up against a tall bar table. In the picture their friends looked shell shocked and scared, Leo’s usually mischievous face was pale as a ghost. Frank had his mouth open like he was shouting something at Percy. The animation started and Frank wrapped his enormous arms around Percy’s midsection and tried to

separate them at the same time Leo tugged frantically at Jason's elbow. In the loop he easily brushed Leo's hands away and Percy wriggled out from Frank's grasp before he pulled Jason closer and pressed him up against the table to kiss him again. There were no rings on their fingers. The picture went dark and then reset.

"Told you we tried to stop you." Frank said quietly.

Jason really had nothing to say so he turned his attention to the second photo on the top. It showed a slightly blurred Grover with both his arms outstretched, eyes wide with disbelief. In the loop the satyr lurched forwards and the view followed him to where he was trying to take two bottles of Aqua Vitae from Percy. Percy stuck his tongue out at his best friend and tossed a bottle to Jason. They opened them and clinked them together before taking long drinks of them, one of Percy's hands busy fending off Grover. As soon as the satyr saw them drinking he ceased his efforts and slumped over in defeat. The loop ended.

"And I tried to stop you from drinking." Grover said miserably. "You just wouldn't see sense. I *know* you hate getting drunk…"

"I'm sorry," Percy whispered. "I-I don't know why I did that."

The bottom left picture was of him smugly holding up a *drachma* . He presented it between the tips of two fingers to a skeptical looking Percy. Picture Jason smirked and did a complicated hand movement that resembled something a slight-of-hand street magician would do. When he presented the *drachma* to Percy again it's appearance had altered to resemble a blue casino poker chip. Jason's lips formed what he thought were the words *Ta-da!* and Percy laughed, obviously delighted by the trick. Picture Jason flipped the chip and it became a *drachma* once more before he changed it back to a poker chip.

“Misuse of the Mist, Jason.” Hedge tutted, shaking a finger at him. “How very naughty of you.”

Fuck, Chiron would be so disapointed in him when he found out. “Hey, Coach, don’t ever use the word ‘naughty’ again, please. Also...it’s not like we actually turned it-” Jason cut himself off as something clicked in his brain. The bulky weight of the wallet shoved into his pocket was a glaring reminder that he had much more money in there than he had at the start of the night. “...in.” He finished.

“How do you think you got all the money that’s stretching out your wallet, huh?” Hedge told him.

“Wait, look. I don’t think we got it all from turning in fake poker chips.” Percy said, indicating the last picture on the page.

It showed Percy seated at a casino game table, a mountain of multicolored poker chips stacked next to him with Jason standing behind him, his hands resting on Percy’s shoulders. This loop was very short, animating just long enough for picture Percy and Jason to throw their hands up in celebration as the dealer used a long stick to shove more chips their way. The other players watched in silent anger as Percy’s winning hand left them several bets behind. Picture Jason leaned over and kissed up and down the side of Percy’s face as the dealer deposited their winnings into a black bag for them.

“See, we won a lot of-” Percy stopped and blinked rapidly a few times. “Uh oh.”

“‘Uh oh’ what?” Grover asked, alarmed.

Jason could sense it coming on too so he crossed his arms on the table and pillowed his head on them. “Here we go again.”

Percy followed his example and rested his head on his folded arms. “Be back soon I guess.”

The last thing Jason saw was their friends taking their seats again. Nico shut the album and left it where it was before picking up a box of Cheez-Its and turning to address the others.

He shoved a handful of crackers into his mouth. “So anyways, as I was saying, Annabeth and Piper said that-”

Jason’s vision went black.

Chips? Yes, Please.

Chapter Notes

Thanks again NinjaSpyWizard!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Flashback-Bar In The Marriott Hotel-

Jason's POV

"Yeah?" Jason asked, his voice slightly unsteady with nerves. He set his glass on the counter as he watched Percy bite his lip and nod, one hand playing with the straw in his own glass. His canine tooth sunk deep into the skin, drawing his gaze. Jason wondered if those lips were as soft as they looked. Would they taste like sea salt? Probably not, that would be way too cliche and most likely not very pleasant.

The corner of Percy's mouth drew up, hiding his teeth, and he cleared his throat. Jason looked up and realized too late he'd been caught staring. He blushed lightly but didn't apologize. If they were really going to go through with it then there was no need to, he'd be doing more than staring soon. After all, you had to kiss when you got married, right?

He wasn't sure if it had anything to do with the way he was looking at Percy or if it was just the situation in general, but Percy did something he'd never seen him do before. He broke eye contact and ducked his head, turning his face away slightly. The gesture was meek and bashful, not at all something Percy would normally do, and it gave him a small thrill to know that he was the cause of it. Percy was not one to act shy but right now that's exactly the vibe he was giving off.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw the table Grover, Coach Hedge,

Will, and Nico were seated at while they waited for Leo and Frank to get back. The small case of the wine Mr. D had given Grover sat on the tabletop between him and Hedge, carefully disguised by the Mist as a business suitcase. The bartender had informed them that no outside drinks were allowed inside the bar.

None of them seemed to notice Percy and him navigating this very precarious conversation. He was glad they had stayed at the bar to talk, it gave the two of them a brief respite from the constant presence of their friends.

Percy fiddled with his straw a few more times before his hand suddenly froze. Jason waited for him to say something, not wanting to pressure him. He was sort of worried that Percy had changed his mind, but when he sat up straight his face was firmly set in determination. All signs of shyness were completely gone.

“Yeah.” Percy confirmed, answering his earlier question. This time he didn’t back down and met his gaze head on, something a little like mischief and a lot like excitement brightening his eyes.

The girl on the other side of Percy took another sip off her neon green drink and shimmied her chest so her shirt rode down, exposing an obscene amount of cleavage. “So I mean like, I’ve got a room upstairs...I don’t usually do things like this but if you wanted, we could go have a good time. You can both come, I wouldn’t mind being shared if you know what I-”

They lunged at the same time, hands reaching, bar stools sliding back across the floor. Their lips smashed together as Percy fisted his hands in the front of his shirt and Jason’s found themselves on either side of Percy’s face. Percy backed him up until he was sandwiched between him and the bar counter. It was sloppy, uncoordinated, and desperately frantic, but it was the best kiss Jason had ever experienced. Percy tasted sweet, sweeter than the Shirley Temples they had been drinking. And yes... impossibly there it was: the almost

imperceptible tang of the sea, which was ridiculous because it's not like Percy went around drinking salt water or anything. He was glad to find that it wasn't unpleasant, but rather quite enthralling.

The lady sitting in the next stool who had been giving them sly, not so subtle propositions for the last thirty minutes squeaked in alarm and grabbed her drink so it was out of the way of their very public make out session. "Oh-oh my god, I'm so sorry, I had no idea you were together!" She quickly stood up and wandered off, apologizing profusely for hitting on them. They paid her no attention, wholly focused on this new experience.

The bartender sighed and picked up their empty glasses. He turned to put them in the dish tub, muttering, "Knew it was only a matter of time. Been eye-fucking each other for half an hour now."

Percy leaned back for a breath of air, panting lightly. His green eyes were wide with wonder. "Who needs girlfriends, right?"

"Yeah," he replied, feeling himself get lost in everything that made up Percy Jackson. "Why didn't we do this sooner?"

"Girlfriends, remember?"

"Then why are we doing this now?" He asked, trying to get through the slow chugging pace his brain chose to operate on in that moment. He knew they had agreed to get married, and he knew that... that was pretty much it. The second he'd set his glass back on the bar everything before that had become a blurry haze of disjointed sounds and unreliable memories. Well, almost everything. He knew where he was and why, and that they were waiting for the rest of their group to meet them here before hitting the casinos.

Percy's eyebrows drew down as he thought, his head cocked to the side. His eyes flicked past him to look at their Shirley Temple glasses sitting on the counter top. "I don't...know. Do you feel strange at all?"

Jason tried to take a minute to evaluate himself, but he kept getting distracted by the man still pressed up against him. His hard, lean body was so much more thrilling to hold than a girl's soft, curvy one. He felt the power that rippled under Percy's skin, not only from his physical strength, but also from his abilities. There wasn't a tangible way to describe it but Jason *sensed* the godly energy that he had inherited from his dad, almost like his own innate power was being polarized by the closeness of it.

“A little” He admitted, letting his hands fall away from Percy’s face and settling them on his waist instead. Percy was built like a swimmer. He had a slimmer, more compact musculature structure rather than a bulky one. As such, Percy’s waist was more narrow than Jason’s own and his hands wrapped around it nicely, hip bones slotting perfectly into his palms. Jason slipped his thumbs up under the hem of his shirt, feeling the skin there erupt in goosebumps at his touch and hearing the hitch in Percy’s breath. His eyes had followed his hands down but now he looked back up. Unable to help it, Jason released his grip on one of Percy's hips and ran his thumb along his bottom lip, marvelling at how soft it was, wanting to feel it against his own again. Their eyes met. “Do we care, though?” He whispered recklessly.

Directly behind him the bartender cleared his throat and said, “Hands above the waist, gentlemen, this isn’t a club.” Like with the woman from earlier, they ignored him but that didn’t seem to bother the man, who simply took the glasses from the counter and wandered off.

Warm breath fluttered over his thumb as Percy exhaled slowly. “No.” He whispered back, and then they were kissing again. Jason wound both arms around Percy’s waist and held onto him tightly.

“No, no, no, like I was saying, Leo, I don’t think that-...oh jeez, look, Percy and Jason are wrestling.” Frank sighed. Two pairs of footsteps got louder as their friends approached. “Could you guys hold off on sparring for at least just toni-” A repetitive slapping noise cut Frank off and Jason opened his eyes to see Leo smacking Frank’s arm, his face frozen in shock. Percy’s tongue twined around his and he let his eyelids slide shut again.

“F-Frank, I don’t think they’re sparring. Frank, they're *kissing!* Frank? Frank! Frank, are you seeing this too?!” Leo asked, panicky and scared.

“Uh, yeah, uh. Uh-huh.” was all Frank had to say back.

The sound of multiple chairs scraping across the floor sounded out and then Grover’s voice piped up. “There you guys are. Ready to- *WHAT THE FUCK!”* That finally got Percy to detach himself from Jason, and Jason honestly didn’t blame him because he hadn’t ever heard Grover cuss before. Percy blinked rapidly a few times, his lips parted ever so slightly before swallowing hard and composing himself. He twisted his torso a bit in the cage of Jason’s arms to look back at their friends. Jason tore his eyes off Percy to see the others too.

Frank and Leo were pretty much how they were before he’d closed his eyes, Leo’s hand was resting on Frank’s bicep as if he’d been in the action of slapping it but froze. Over at the table Coach Hedge had his lips pursed so hard they were white, his eye brows so far up his forehead they disappeared under the brim of his baseball cap. Grover had one hand on the back of his chair while he hovered over it, paused in the motion of standing up, his eyes bugging out of his head. Will’s jaw was hanging open, he was holding a glass a few inches off the table and Nico’s cheeks were bulging out as if had just taken a drink of something but hadn’t quite had the time to swallow it yet.

“W...what is going on?” Grover asked weakly, his voice wobbly and probably on the verge of letting out a goatly bleat.

In front of him, Percy smiled wide. If Jason had to guess what was going to happen next he'd say chaos. He was usually right. "We're getting married!" Percy announced proudly, throwing his hands up in celebration. It gave Jason the opportunity to hold him closer.

Nico spewed his drink out with a high pitched sound that could have been a peal of laughter if it wasn't drenched in whatever liquid had escaped with it. Will leaned back quickly to avoid getting a spit shower which made him drop the glass in his hand. It didn't break but it did hit the table with a *thunk* and fall over, spilling its contents all over the table where it mixed with Nico's rejected mouthful of presumably alcohol.

The noise the glass made as it fell startled Grover so bad he toppled out of his chair and sat down hard on the floor in front of the coach. Jason honestly wasn't even sure if Hedge even still *had* eyebrows at this point because he hadn't seen them once since they'd migrated north for the proverbial winter.

"H-ha, ha, funny joke?" Frank said, silently begging them to say *Sike! Just a prank!*

"No joke," Jason told them, his arms still firmly locked around Percy's waist. "we are. Tonight, in fact." He pressed his lips to the side of Percy's face, which prompted him to turn and look up at him. Feeling bold, he swooped down and caught his mouth in another kiss. When Percy returned it, Jason felt like he could fight Tartarus himself, barehanded.

Exactly three footsteps landed before an enormous Frank-shaped shadow was looming over them and then a pair of muscular arms were worming their way in between their bodies as Frank bear hugged Percy from behind. Jason seriously considered giving him a painful zap of electricity but right before he did a pair of scorching hot hands

locked themselves around one of his elbows and started tugging frantically.

Frank grunted and pulled Percy backwards, lifting him off his feet a few inches with enough force to break Jason's locked grip, but not enough to fully disconnect them. "Percy, what are you thinking?! What about Annabeth? Percy, you're *cheating* on her! She's going to kick your ass...she's going to kick Jason's ass...dude she's going to kick *my ass!* Knock it off, why are you doing this?" Frank shouted. " *Urgh, let go of him, Percy!"* Percy just laughed and squirmed in Frank's arms, trying to get free.

Leo redoubled his efforts and managed to wrestle control of the arm he had in a death grip. Jason finally lost hold of Percy and Frank was able to turn with him still wrapped up in his arms. Jason didn't think Frank realized how hard it was to try to contain the sea if it wanted to be let free. Frank was strong, scarily so, but if there was anything Percy was good at, it was getting out of places he didn't want to be. With one final twist, he raised his arms up and dropped out of the circle of Frank's arms, landing on the floor in a crouch. Frank grunted in frustration and tried to grab him again but Percy smirked and dodged him, springing to his feet. With quick, nimble steps he pranced around Frank to make it back to Jason.

Leo saw him coming and pulled him back a few steps. Jason turned his head. "Sorry, buddy." he said over his shoulder.

Leo's hands started to heat up more. "Jason, don't you da-" Jason shook his arm and gave him the little static shock he had contemplated using on Frank. It was only enough to sting, but it did the trick and he was freed, Leo yelping from the jolt. "That *hurt!"*

"It was supposed to," He said unapologetically. Jason opened his arms just in time for Percy to rush into them. He was pushed back by the force a bit until he encountered the bar and then they were kissing once again. Jason just couldn't get enough of him.

Frank and Leo lunged forward but they didn't even get their hands on them before the bartender appeared behind Jason and Percy with crossed arms. "Excuse me, gentlemen, but there will be no laying of hands here. If you continue to initiate rough physical contact I will be forced to have you escorted out of the bar."

Leo put his hands together and bowed fractionally to the bartender in a thank you. "Sorry, sir, we'll make sure they stop. We don't know what's gotten-"

"I meant *you* and your very large friend. These two," He uncrossed one arm to indicate where Percy was still clinging onto him, "Have not caused me any problems. They are simply enjoying their night, so please do not assault the other patrons."

Grover scrambled to his feet and threw his hands out, palms up, in their direction and spluttered. "What-they-but they-you can't-*girlfriends* -and they-"

The bartender inclined his head towards Percy, one eyebrow raised. "Sir, if these men are bothering you and your fiance, I can make them leave. You need only say the word."

Percy quickly shook his head. "No, no, that's okay. They're our friends, there's just been a small misunderstanding, we're fine."

Will made a long drawn out squeak. " *Small misunderstanding?"*

Jason gave the bartender his best charming smile. "See? Nothing to worry about." The man pursed his lips but accepted their explanation and left to go help another customer further down the bar.

Percy turned in his arms, leaning his back against Jason's chest so he could address their friends. He cleared his throat. "So, I know this might look bad, but trust us. We know what we're doing, we both agreed to this."

"We talked about this for a while. It's already been decided, you can't change our minds." Jason said.

"Uh, *for a while?* How long have you been planning this?!" Grover angrily folded his arms over his chest.

Percy titled his head up to confer with him. " *Ehhhhh…"* Jason said, lifting one shoulder and then letting it drop in a half-hearted shrug.

Percy nodded. "Yeah, that's what I was thinking too." To the others he said, "About thirty minutes."

Grover threw his arms down, exasperated, and Hedge rubbed his eyes furiously with the heels of his palms, accidentally pushing his baseball cap up a few inches. Oh, there his eyebrows were."You mean to tell me that the entire half hour we've been in this bar, you two have been over there *planning a wedding?* " the coach said. " *What* prompted *that?"*

"Oh no, sorry Coach, we haven't actually made any plans yet, we just...got engaged I guess? We decided it was the best plan together. You should be happy for us." Jason said.

" *Happy for you?"* Nico exclaimed, sitting back in his chair, throwing one leg over the other. "Oh, boys, I'm *ecstatic* for you! But...Frank has a point. You are both in committed, albeit rocky, relationships and as

proud as I am to be here for your coming out wedding, I don't condone cheating."

Percy scoffed. "Please, you guys worry too much. Just *trust* us. What if I told you we'd already broken up with them?".

Will laughed hard and loud. "Then I would say that is the most bullshit lie I've ever heard come out of your mouth, Jackson, and I've known you for nine years."

"Fuck," Percy muttered, "stupid god of truth powers." He leaned his head back so it rested on Jason's shoulder.

"Okay, listen." Jason said sternly. "We are consenting adults. This is our choice, so whatever fallout comes from this is ours to deal with. We *understand* that. So you can either accept our choice, or…" He hunched down, putting his face next to Percy's, staring the others down. A sweet scent wafted up off of his fiance's skin along with his usual sea breeze aura. Jason let his voice drop down a few octaves, "...you can *try* to stop us." The fingers Percy had loosely wrapped around his forearms twitched and the pulse point in his neck beat a little faster. He didn't particularly enjoy looking menacing, but he knew he pulled it off well. No matter how much people forgot the fact that he'd been literally raised by a pack of wolves, he never could. He wasn't uncivilized by any means, but he knew how to intimidate. After years of being held on a pedestal and given leadership he never wanted, he had developed the ability to put on the mask everyone expected a son of Zeus to have.

Percy in general was just a terrifying force of nature. He didn't have to put a mask on for that, he usually put the mask on to *hide* that. Especially around some people… but he didn't want to think about her right now.

All in all, Jason knew how they looked together. Two children of the Big Three in a united front, silently challenging anyone who dared to oppose them. It was most certainly a dick move, doing this to their friends of all people, but godsdamnit, this is the first time in a long while that Jason had chosen to do something simply because he *wanted it.* No one told him to do this, no one expected it from him. In fact, as their friends had just helpfully demonstrated, people would most likely *oppose* them being together, and if there's one thing Jason liked more than being unnoticed, it was doing the opposite of what people expected.

He wasn't being cocky, just factual, when he assessed Nico as the only real threat to him and Percy in that moment. The others would put up a good fight, sure, but they were easy to take down, even Frank if they were quick enough. Nico...well, he would be the problem. All three of them had their own unique qualities that made them lethal, powerful, and on par with each other but with Nico's shadow travel and his other carefully honed abilities, he could definitely hold his own. And with Will backing him up, it would be a tough fight.

Wait. A fight? Why was he even *thinking* like that? He was categorizing his friends on a list of who he could take down first. An unfamiliar tendril of rage slithered through him and he locked eyes with Nico, who drew back in his chair with an expression that clearly said, *um,* excuse you *, who the fuck do you think* you're *looking at?!* The fingers on Jason's arm tightened almost painfully as Percy tensed up, his muscles subtly getting ready for a fight.

The floorboards under Frank creaked as the big guy did an immediate three hundred and sixty degree turn, head whipping this way and that as he agitatedly searched for...something in the room. His fists were clenched, jaw set firmly with anger. Frank's sudden movement seemed to break the tension that had been building, the rage bleeding out of Jason as quickly as it had set in and he felt Percy relax too. Nico shook his head and blinked, a frown pulling his lips downward.

"Was that you, Frank?" Nico asked while he picked up his cup with shaky hands and took a drink of it.

Frank narrowed his eyes and flicked them around with suspicion a moment more before he finally seemed to give up on his fruitless search. “I…yeah it must have been…sorry.”

Percy took a deep, controlled breath, letting his hands unclasp their death grip. “Gods, Frank, don’t *do* that. Do you want us all to kill each other?”

“N-no, I didn’t mean-”

Coach Hedge hopped down from his chair, the soles of his shoes clopping loudly on the floor. He sighed. “Demigods and alcohol do *not* mix. You little bombs can go off with the slightest provocation when you lose control of your inhibitions, hence why *I’m* here to keep you in check. Well, and you two.” He pointed to Percy and him. “But it seems like you needed a little checking yourself. Good thing you’re not getting drunk tonight. Come on, kids, let’s hit the casinos, I’m not too fond of this bar anymore. We can talk when we get there.” Hedge’s tone was soothing and playful but the tightness around his eyes told another story. His right hand twitched next to his hip where he usually kept his baseball bat in it’s holster. Jason was glad he’d decided to leave it in his room for the night. Frank’s little rage outburst had obviously affected the satyrs too, because Grover’s nostrils flared and he restlessly shuffled his legs a bit.

“Actually we are.” Percy said defiantly, stepping out of Jason’s embrace to put his hands on his hips. He let him go reluctantly.

Hedge stopped in the act of reaching for the Mist-disguised alcohol. “You’re what?”

“Getting drunk.” Jason clarified.

Leo gave a time out gesture. “Uhhh, hold up...you don’t drink.”

“We do tonight.” Percy retorted.

Leo gave him a confused look, but it was Grover that spoke this time. “Percy, think about this. You *know* why you don’t drink. As your best friend, I’m gonna have to object to...well everything about this.”

“And as *your* best friend, I’m telling you it’s okay. We never do it, so this once will be fine. Jason and I made a pact: drink for a drink and we stick together all night.” Percy explained.

Grover shook his head furiously, brown curls bouncing where they stuck out from under his rasta cap. “Nuh-uh, no way. You’re not getting drunk because you’re gonna hate yourself for it in the morning, and I don’t want to have to deal with hungover you. You always regret it, and I *know* this time isn’t any different.”

Percy sighed and walked up to his best friend to put a hand on his shoulder. “Okay, you’re right, Grover. It is a bad idea and we shouldn’t do it.” If Percy really had changed his mind then Jason would be fine with that. The only reason he’d agreed to drink in the first place was because-

“Really?” Grover asked hopefully, “So does that mean you aren’t going to drink then?”

Percy used the hand he still had on Grover’s shoulder to hold him still as he struck, quick as a snake, and plucked the last two full bottles out of the six pack on the table. “Nope,” He said, popping the P loudly. “I’m just agreeing with you that it’s a bad idea, but that’s never

stopped me before."

The Mist fell away from the bottles as they were removed from the rest of the pack and he quickly shot a glance at the bartender, thinking he'd come back to tell them off for having outside drinks. The man was watching the scene unfold out of the corner of his eye while he repetitively polished the same glass with a rag over and over again. He caught Jason looking at him and surprisingly turned away, walking off in the direction of the employee back room. There was no one else behind the counter and when a customer tried to get his attention, the bartender acted like he hadn't heard him and disappeared through the doorway.

The satyr yelped in disbelief and tried to snatch the bottles back but Percy danced backwards out his reach, letting go of his shoulder. Grover rushed after him, arms outstretched, determined to get them. Percy blindly tossed one of the bottles behind him and Jason expertly caught it, twisting the cap off in the same smooth motion. The sweet, sugary scent of a bakery wafted up from it.

Percy took his cap off too right as Grover reached him and he had to use one hand to hold him at bay, sticking his tongue out at him childishly. He saw Frank and Leo start towards them to help Grover in his efforts. Percy gave Jason a wink, which he returned, and then they were drinking. He was prepared for the scorch and burn that usually came with alcohol, or even the tang from wine, but the Aqua Vitae was pleasantly smooth and sweet. It warmed him up almost instantaneously from the inside out, spreading a gentle tingling sensation throughout his body. Whatever this stuff was made of hit you almost the second it reached your stomach.

When he brought the bottle back down his head was spinning and the room seemed much brighter than before. When he was able to focus again he noticed that Percy's cheeks were slightly flushed and he felt his own face grow warmer. Grover was slumped over in defeat.

“-drink that in…moderation.” Coach Hedge said, finishing a sentence Jason hadn’t even known he’d started. Hedge sighed, picking up the pack of bottles. “Well, nothing we can do now. Might as well go try to enjoy the rest of the night. Come on, kids. It’s gambling time.”

Grover scrubbed his face with his palms. “Fine.” He pointed at Percy and said sternly. “Do not complain about this in the morning, because I will have zero sympathy for you.”

Percy put his hands up in a placating gesture, his still-open bottle clutched in one of them. “Noted.”

“I can’t believe this is happening.” Nico murmured. “I can’t believe I’m here to *witness* it happening. Wait till my dad hears about this.” He snickered quietly under his breath as everyone got ready to leave. That is one thing he hadn’t thought of: the godly ramifications them getting married might cause. Hades would most likely find it hilarious, but only because it would undoubtedly piss his and Percy’s dads off. Whatever happened, they would deal with it later. Tonight was about celebration, after all.

Grover, Frank, and Leo were giving him and Percy the cold-shoulder, but he couldn’t really be mad at them for it. They were just doing what any good friend would do in this kind of situation. If it had been him who’d walked up on Grover and Leo making out he knew he would have done the same thing and tried to stop them.

They exited the bar and made their way through the lobby of the hotel. Outside, the sky was just beginning to show the barest hint of darkening and the air was warm and dry, smelling of creosote, hot pavement, cheap perfume, and stale beer. Their hotel was on a busy street, not quite on the Strip but close enough for it to count. Up and down the sidewalk in either direction were casinos, hotels, moneylenders, pawn shops, bars, tattoo parlours, and any other businesses you’d need for a night on the town in Sin City.

Coach Hedge breathed in deep and exhaled in satisfaction, one hand on his hip. “Ahhh, smell that, boys? That’s the scent of horrible decisions, regretful life choices, and questionable sanity.” He paused for a moment and then turned his head to look at where he and Percy were standing side by side, Jason’s free arm casually thrown over the shorter man’s shoulders. “Oh, wait. That’s just you two.”

Jason gave the coach an unimpressed look while Nico and Will laughed openly. He couldn’t see the other three but he assumed they had been just as amused by Hedge’s joke.

Percy inhaled just as exaggeratedly as Hedge had, his chest expanding and contracting against Jason’s side. “Gods, I can’t *wait* for more.”

Coach Hedge rolled his eyes at him. “Alright then, where to?” He asked as he started to pass the bottles around to everyone. Will and Nico got one to share, which they seemed perfectly alright with, and the other three got one each. “Now remember, don’t drink another type of alcohol with this, make sure you drink it *slowly,”* a pointed glare in their direction, “and don’t let any mortals taste it. This stuff is probably not good for them.” When all the bottles were gone from the cardboard holster, Hedge folded it up to an impressively tiny square and slipped it into his fanny pack.

“You got it, Coach.” Leo said, tapping two fingers to his forehead in a salute. “And, uh, I’m not really sure where to go. I’ve never actually been here before.” He added, observing the city come to life around them with interest.

“I have,” said Nico bitterly, “But we’re *not* going there.”

“I second that,” Grover piped up. “No one goes near the Lotus Casino

and Hotel, got that? If you see it, turn around and run, don't even question it."

"Aye, aye, captain," Percy said. Grover shot him a dirty look and pointedly rotated his body so his back was facing them. Percy looked a little sad at that but seemed to quickly shake it off.

"Well, I guess we just walk until we find someplace that looks interesting. Sound good?" Will suggested. No one had any better ideas so as a group they picked a direction and started off down the sidewalk.

They ended up in a colorful casino that had a ritzy air about it. It was very nice and definitely over-decorated with shiny gold colored accents on the sides of tables and wall supports, flashing lights, vases of what looked like peacock feathers, giant crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling, potted mini palm trees, and a whole other assortment of everything you'd expect to find in a place like this. It looked like something straight out of a movie, gaudy decorations and drunk patrons included. It's name was something to do with mirrors, or maybe it was illusions, Jason didn't really care enough to remember but it eventually did come back to him. The Mirage.

"Oh, yeah, this'll do nicely." the coach said approvingly. "Good eye, Grover. I think we're gonna have a lot of fun here. They even have an arcade!" Hedge rubbed his hands together. "Alright, you all know the rules. If we get split up, we meet back at our hotel at ten thirty."

"Got it." Grover said.

"Good. Now be safe, have fun, and most importantly don't do anything Percy and Jason would do." Hedge said, earning him a few more snickers here and there, including from Percy himself.

With that, the satyr fast-walked towards the arcade. He thought he saw him disappear into a kung fu simulator but he couldn't really be sure. Grover turned to survey the casino floor, debating where to go first. They didn't have a lot of money, but they certainly didn't come empty handed. They had maybe a few hundred dollars pooled together, which should be enough to entertain them for a while.

"Jason," Percy whispered. He leaned closer so he could hear him over the sea of slot machines behind them. "When do you want to get married? And where?"

"Well we saw plenty of chapels on the way over here, I guess we could just pick any one that has an opening. Although I don't know how much it'll cost. Probably not a lot considering this is pretty much elope central."

"Hmmm." Percy put a hand to his chin while he thought it over. "Damn, you're right. It might not be that much but I didn't bring any extra money with me."

"Me either," He admitted. "We certainly aren't going to use the party funds."

"Oh of course not," Percy agreed. "but we better figure something out."

Jason's eyes landed on the gated teller's counter. A sign hung halfway up on the security bars read *Chip Return/Chip Purchase* . A stupid, stupid and definitly illegal idea popped into his head. It would go against everything he had been told not to do when he'd been taught how to manipulate the Mist. He almost chickened out but Percy tilted his head and narrowed his eyes like he knew Jason was struggling

with this choice.

“What? You look like you have an idea. Spill it, Grace.”

He chewed on his bottom lip while he decided what to do. Steeling his nerves, Jason raised his bottle to his lips, pausing only long enough for Percy to get the memo and join him in a drink. He swallowed and capped his bottle, slipping it halfway into his back pocket. He reached into his front one and withdrew the *drachma* he always kept there for IM emergencies. The others were still arguing on where to go first, paying them no attention.

He cleared his throat and leaned sideways, letting his hip support him up against the half-wall that separated the different games on the floor. A quick look over at the blackjack tables gave him everything he needed. Jason held up the *drachma* between the tips of his pointer and middle finger, rotating it so Percy could see both sides.

“Jason, that’s a *drachma.* Pretty sure that’s outside the regulations for what types of currencies they can take.” Percy raised an eyebrow, clearly unimpressed.

He laughed, his mood brightening as the alcohol worked through him. A strong desire to show off to his fiance hit him. “Is anything really what it seems to be?” Percy opened his mouth to say something, “Ah, ah, ah, don’t talk, just watch. Here you see an ordinary ancient Greek coin, yes?” Percy closed his mouth and the corner of it tilted up fractionally as he nodded and watched Jason’s impromptu performance. “Good. Keep your eyes on me, don’t look away or you might miss it.” Green eyes bored into him, never blinking. Percy set his face into a carefully blank expression, clasping his hands behind his back and straightening his posture.

Jason spun the coin around the back of his middle finger, letting it fall

into his palm where he closed his hand around it. He took command of the invisible strands of Mist that were always lurking around and wove it around the coin in his hand before presenting it once more. He held up a dark blue poker chip with the casino's seal inked on one side and *$100* inked on the other.

"Ta-da!" He said, throwing his free hand out with fingers splayed wide. The theatrics and jazz-hand were really overselling it if he was being honest, but who cared. A delighted grin broke through Percy's composed face and he flashed his teeth as he laughed for the trick. Jason flipped it again and let the Mist fall away, revealing the *drachma* for a split second before turning it back into the chip.

He looked down at it, proud that it had worked so flawlessly. He didn't see him move until he got an arm full of a laughing Percy who started peppering kisses across his cheek. "You're such a dork, but I have to admit that was very impressive." Percy pressed his lips to the side of his neck right below his ear, and whispered, "And *really* hot."

Jason almost dropped the poker chip. Somehow he managed to keep hold of it. Shocked, he turned his head sharply to look at him and Percy giggled, using the opportunity to kiss him on the lips.

Nico made a retching noise and opened his mouth, sticking his tongue out to mime the *gag-me-with-spoon* gesture. Percy released him and turned around. Sometime during Jason's magic trick Nico, Will, and Leo had noticed them and started watching. Grover and Frank were deep in conversation still. How much of his trick they had seen, Jason had no idea.

Leo looked pale, but Will had his head tilted to the side with a smile on his face. "Aww, they're adorable!" He crooned.

Nico rolled his eyes. "Adorably disgusting, maybe. If I have to see

them playing tonsil hockey one more time tonight, I swear I'm gonna shadow travel out of here."

Will snorted. "Tonsil hockey?" He muttered in an amused and slightly beguiled tone.

"Let's make a deal," Percy said, holding his palm up for the chip. Jason dropped it into his waiting hand. Percy held it up so his friends could see it. "If we can turn this chip into...let's say four thousand dollars, then you guys have to stop harping on us. *And* you have to go to the wedding."

" *Four thousand dollars?* There's no way that's happening. Not without a miracle at least." Leo said incredulously.

Nico narrowed his eyes suspiciously and walked over to Percy, staring him down (or rather *up* in Nico's vertically challenged case). Percy met his glare head on.

"Four thousand?" Nico asked.

"Four big ones." Percy confirmed, giving him his best mischievous smirk. "And we'll even give you guys half of it to split."

They sized each other up, neither willing to back down. Finally Nico stuck his hand out and Percy grabbed it to shake on their deal. Nico tugged his arm down and Percy stumbled forward as he was forced to hunch over. Nico returned his smirk. "Deal. *But* you have a time limit. Two hours. Two hours, and if you haven't made the four thousand, then you can't get married. That's my stipulation. You win the bet, you can get married and we'll all be there and we won't say another negative word about it all night. Hell, I'll even be the flower girl, but if *I* win? I get everything you've managed to earn, you and Jason

break up, IM Annabeth and Piper immediately after and tell them what you two almost did. Sound good, Jackson?"

Jason expected Percy to back out of the deal after that, but to everyone's surprise, he just laughed. He saw Nico's smile waver ever so slightly as he tried to find a loophole in his side of the deal. "You're giving me a whole *two hours?* That's a piece of blue cake, baby. It's a done deal, my friend, but you can't chicken out when I hand you that basket before I walk down the aisle." Percy was being cocky as hell, too cocky in his opinion. Two hours to turn a hundred bucks into four thousand? Unless they got really *really* lucky there was no way this was going to go as planned.

"I don't go back on my word." Nico said stiffly. "Those are the terms and I'll stick to them. We *all* will, won't we guys?" He turned his head only enough to see Will and Leo who were watching this exchange with wide eyes. In sync, they nodded. "I'll make sure Grover and Frank abide, too."

If this deal was the cream then Percy appeared to be the cat that got to steal it. His grin was almost shark-like as he pumped their clasped hands up and down once. Nico went to pull away but this time Percy held on. "Swear it on the Styx."

For the first time, Nico actually looked nervous. He gulped and shook his bangs out of his face, but when he spoke his voice betrayed nothing. "I swear it on the Styx." An ominous cold wall of air washed over them all and they shivered. It was gone as quick as it had come. He couldn't even track the air patterns around it.

"I swear on the Styx." Percy vowed. Another freezing wave blew through the casino.

They finally let go of each other's hands right as Frank and Grover

turned around. Frank was jumpy, his warm brown eyes scanning for threats as Grover scented the air before his eyes landed on Percy and Nico's outstretched hands.

"What did you do?" Grover accused them. "Why did I just smell the Underworld inside of a Vegas casino?"

"It's cool, we just swore on the Styx." Nico told him.

"What...did you swear about?" Frank hesitantly asked. Nico explained the terms of their deal quickly. Grover's face turned more and more horrified with each new word Nico said.

"Oh no. Oh, no, no, no, no. What have you *done,* Nico?!" Grover reached up and threaded his hands into his hair, tugging at it in distress.

Will spread his hands in a calming gesture. "Hey, it's okay, everything is fine. It's impossible for them to realistically make that kind of money in that time frame."

Grover shook his head, letting out a tiny bleat. "You don't understand! You don't *know* Percy!" Jason actually thought everyone knew each other quite well, but Grover made it sound like Percy had some huge secret or something. Percy's smug face told him that it was probably true.

"We've known him forever, Grover, what are you talk-" Will started.

" *No!* You've known him since he was twelve. You didn't know him before then. You don't know *who his step-dad was."*

He did know, actually. Not much, because Percy didn't like to talk about it, but Jason knew he was a deadbeat abusive loser who was next to useless. He didn't see why that would be relevant to this situation, though.

Nico took a step back, eyes wide. "W-who was his step-dad?"

Percy waved offhandedly. "Only just the winner of the American Poker Championship three years in a row. And guess who he made practice with him when his buddies couldn't make it?"

"That...doesn't mean you're *good* at it, right?" Leo asked hopefully.

Percy studied the blue poker chip intently. "Well, I only beat him every other time. So you're probably right. This deal definitely isn't in my favor *at all.* " His fiance, he concluded, was an evil, manipulative monster. Jason was extremely turned on.

Panicking, he stared hard at a random chair, trying to get himself to calm down before he got an embarrassing public boner. Chairs weren't sexy, especially this chair with its annoying gold trim and its low backrest that would be uncomfortable to lean back on. *Think of the chair, Jason,* he told himself. Thankfully it worked.

"You've doomed us all." Grover moaned. "There's no way out of it. I hear wedding bells in the near future and they aren't even mine yet."

"Awww, cheer up, buddy." Percy swung an arm around his best friend and pulled him close. "You get to be my Best Man so lighten up a little."

Jason elbowed Leo and waggled his eyebrows at him. “You know what that means, don’t you?”

His friend groaned. “Do I have to?”

“Yes.”

“Hold up, everybody stop acting like he’s already won when he hasn’t even started yet.” Nico said. “Your time starts now, Percy. Meet me here in two hours.”

Before they hit the poker tables Jason and Percy split from the group and went to the teller so they could break the blue chip down into green ten dollar ones. The first game table Percy played at he acted like he had no idea what poker even was.

Percy sat down on the last stool at the end of the curved table, looking nervous and out of his element. The other players eyed him like he was a choice cut of meat. The dealer raised an eyebrow at Jason, silently asking him if he was going to join. He shook his head no and the dealer’s quick hands started distributing the cards.

“Um, e-excuse me, sir?” The dealer paused and waited for Percy to continue. “I don’t...really know how to play this, could you go over the rules for me?” The other players snickered like they couldn’t believe their luck.

“Look, kid, it might be best if you don’t play. This is your last chance to back out, I wouldn’t want you to lose all your money like this.” The dealer said, eyeing the small pile of green chips sympathetically.

“No. No, it’s fine…I want to play and I’m a fast learner.”

One of the other players, a man in an absurdly large cowboy hat, spoke up. “Aw, c’mon, Deals. Let the kid play. I’m sure the rest of us won’t mind a refresher on the rules, eh?” The others gave fake smiles and nodded enthusiastically.

The dealer sighed and started throwing cards again. “So be it.” As he set the game up he talked, giving a quick explanation as to how you played. It was very brief and glossed over a lot but Percy nodded along anyways.

The first time he got to bet, Percy only gave up one chip, much to no one's surprise. Cowboy hat guy encouraged him and it seemed to work because the next time his turn came around, Percy bet three chips. The players obviously thought this was going to be an easy win, but they didn’t see the way his intelligent green eyes watched every move, every facial expression, and how he carefully planned his next move. But Jason did. He saw, and he watched how carefully Percy kept track of the other players. The last time to call bets went around and Percy over exaggeratedly hesitated before he pushed the rest of his chips into the betting pool, his eyes wide and innocent. He was adorable like that and Jason felt a little twinge in his chest.

The other players hid snickers and smirks behind heavily ringed fingers and hands of cards. Two of the six players dropped out altogether and another folded, which left Cowboy hat guy and Percy who, for all intents and purposes, looked like he had no idea what was about to happen to him.

The dealer called for the reveal and Cowboy hat smugly tossed his hand down, cards facing up. The other players sucked their teeth and *ooo’d* pityingly. The dealer faced Percy.

“You turn, kid. Show us what you got.”

“Oh, you mean I just...okay.” Percy timidly laid his cards down.

The dealer cleared his throat to hide a laugh. “Face up, please.”

Percy chuckled nervously, “Right, sorry.” He flipped his cards around.

Cowboy hat’s smile dropped so quickly Jason thought his lips were going to slide right off his chin. Now, he’ll be the first to admit that he has no clue how to play poker. Other than the vague explanation the dealer had given, Jason had no idea what was going on. Percy’s cards were all one color and they all sported the heart shape in the corners. He had a couple of royalty cards, one ace and one ten.

“Oh, ho, ho, and the newbie steals the pot with a royal flush of red hearts. Beginners luck, kid, congrats.” The dealer picked up a long hooked stick and shuffled the pile of chips to Percy’s corner.

A fist pounded hard on the green felt table top as Cowboy hat guy lurched to his feet. “You little bastard!” He pointed at him and Percy. “Look at that shit-eating grin that little punk has. He played us from the start! You only *acted* like you didn’t know how to play!”

The dealer calmly laid his hands on the table and addressed the man. “Sir, please settle down. Any more signs of aggression and I will have to call for security.”

The man spluttered in outrage. “But he-he tricked us! That’s-”

“Technically not illegal. This is a game of bluffs, after all. Did you not try to convince him to bet everything he had when you thought he was going to lose?”

He looked like he wanted to say more but knew he had no better argument so he scooped up what was left of his chips and stormed off to go play something else.

The dealer took his hands off the table and expertly disposed of all the used cards, dropping them into a small slot in the green felt. “Now then, are you all going to play again?”

The other players quickly got up and hurried away. “Awww, *what!* Come on, guys! I promise I’ll go easy on you!” Percy called after them. One old lady who had to have been in her eighties turned around just long enough to flip him off with both hands. Percy howled with laughter.

“Would you like to wait for more players?” The dealer asked, a small smile dancing around his lips.

Percy stood up from his stool. “Nah, we’re kinda in a hurry so we have to go find one that’s just about to start, sorry.”

The dealer only nodded. “Do you have a chip bag?” When Percy shook his head he reached underneath his counter and pulled up a nondescript black drawstring bag into which he deposited their chips for them. “Enjoy your games, gentlemen.”

The next few matches went pretty much how that one had gone, with Percy acting meek and ditsy only to steal the entire betting pool at the

end. He only lost one match and even then it was like he knew it would happen because he bet as little as possible and folded right before it got too high stakes. The other players fell for it almost every time. At one table, Percy sat down and half the players stood up immediately and booked it in the opposite direction and Jason realized the amount of people they hadn't humiliated was starting to dwindle.

They finally found a table that no one bolted from so the game started once again, but it would have to be their last match. Halfway through Jason checked the time and saw they only had twenty minutes left until they were supposed to meet Nico to settle the bet. He wasn't supposed to talk to the players while the game was going on so he just rested his hands on Percy's shoulders and hoped he got the message. He shouldn't have worried because Percy stole the game not three minutes later, throwing his hands up in celebration, his eyes bright with happiness. Jason couldn't help but lean down and pepper his face in kisses like he had done to him when he'd shown him the Mist trick. The dealer started scooping their chips into their bag for them as Percy giggled and reached up to wrap his arms around Jason's neck so he couldn't leave, not that he wanted to. He gave him an actual kiss, awkward angle though it was.

They left the casino floor to go meet the others and along the way Jason realized they hadn't once taken a drink of their alcohol while they'd been on the floor. His mind was clear and sharp.

Something warm bumped against his hand and he looked down. Percy laced their fingers together and turned his head away, a light blush creeping up his neck. Jason said nothing but squeezed his hand softly and let them sway between them. Nico was already there, along with everyone else including Coach Hedge, who had a black karate belt tied around his waist, his chest puffed out proudly.

They hadn't seen them yet. Nico fidgeted, his fingers twitchy, one foot tapping rapidly on the carpet. Will tucked his smaller form under his arm in an effort to calm him down and it worked up until Nico's eyes zeroed in on them approaching, and then zeroed in on the bulging

black bag, unmistakably full to the brim with poker chips.

“Holy *mackerel!* What the hell did you two do, rob the godsdamn casino?!” Hedge asked, eyes bugging out of his head.

Jason laughed and kissed the top of Percy's head. “Nope. Percy won this all by himself. You should have seen how many old rich guys he made cry, it was beautiful.”

Percy held his bag up in triumph. “Thank you, Gabriel Ugliano, may you rot forever in the anus of Tartarus, you piece of shit! Looks like you weren't completely useless after all.”

“Give.” Nico strutted over and snatched the bag, pulling open the drawstring and plunging his hand in to lift a handful of multicolored chips out. He stared them down hard and Jason realized he was checking to make sure they were real and not Mist conjured copies. He was honestly touched that Nico thought he had the ability to hold an enchantment on so many things at once. Finally he growled in frustration and tossed the chips back in, shoving the bag into Jason’s arms. He had to quickly let go of Percy’s hand to make sure nothing spilled. “They’re real.” Nico said through gritted teeth. “Did you cheat?”

Percy put a hand to his heart in mock offense. “Me? Not according to the dealers. And we haven’t been kicked out yet, so there you go. Although if you run into a guy in a brown cowboy hat you might want to avoid mentioning you know me.”

“Fine. Is it the agreed upon amount?”

Jason actually had no idea how much money all these chips were worth, but he knew it was a lot. He hefted the bag, feeling it’s heavy

weight. “Let’s go find out,” he suggested.

The lady behind the security gate didn’t hide her surprise very well when Jason plopped the jangling bag on her counter. She looked at the chips and then looked between the two of them. “So you two are the ones causing all the commotion tonight.” She slid the bag towards her under the gate and looked inside. “Well, let me just go sort this for you then.” She stood up and heaved the bag to a different counter right behind her chair where she dumped it out into a shallow tray.

What he had originally thought was another counter actually turned out to be some kind of sorting machine. The teller tapped a few buttons on a screen that was set into the wall and the machine whirred to life. She upended the tray on its hinge and the chips clattered into the machine. It didn't take very long, thankfully, and soon the machine turned off and spit out a long receipt. The teller tore the paper off and inspected it critically as she sat back down. “Alright, let's see here. You have a total amount of four thousand four hundred and fifty dollars. Congratulations, how would you like that? We offer cash, check, casino credit, and if you have your bank's routing number we can deposit it directly into your account, which is the safest method and the one I recommend.”

He shrugged at Percy, who thought for a minute and then said, “Do we have to choose one option for all of it?” The teller shook her head. “Okay, then can I get three thousand four hundred fifty in cash and the other thousand can you split and put half into my account and half into his?” He inclined his head towards Jason.

He put his hands up. “Woah, wait a minute, I didn’t win any of this. That’s technically all your money, Percy.”

His fiance rolled his eyes at him. “I wouldn’t have had the chance to win it if it wasn’t for you. Besides, we’re getting married. What’s mine is yours and all that, remember?”

The teller brightened considerably. “Oh, a wedding! I just love weddings, and honestly you’ll never see more of them than in this town. Isn’t it so great that Nevada finally passed that law this year that recognizes same-sex marriage? My girlfriend and I are planning our wedding for next spring!” She sighed happily and then seemed to remember where she was and what she was supposed to be doing. “Oh, uh, sorry. Anyways, I’ll just need your routing numbers and I can get everything finalized for you.”

Jason refused to get his wallet out, hoping that Percy would take the rest of the money himself but he just reached around and shoved his hand inside Jason's back pocket and lifted it out. Percy opened it and pulled out his bank card, laying it on top of his own for the woman and she slid them over to her side. The teller worked quickly and efficiently, inputting their bank information on her computer. “Alright, that’s done, now let me get your cash.” She lifted a keycard strung on a necklace out from under the collar of shirt and walked through a door in the wall by the counting machine. She was back in no time, a cloth bag hung over her shoulder. She counted it out in stacks of one hundred dollars, each bundle wrapped with a paper strap that had the amount printed on it. “Oh, and one more thing before you go. The machine detected something that wasn’t a chip, would you like it back?”

“Uh, sure.” He said. She hurried back through the door, only gone for a second before returning with something held in her hand. Jason put his palm up and she dropped his golden *drachma* into it. Amazingly, it had somehow made its way back into floor circulation and they happened to win it from someone. “Yeah, this is mine. Sorry, I must have accidentally dropped it in there somehow.”

“No worries, happens all the time. One time I found a condom in there.” Jason pulled a face at that and the lady laughed. “It was unopened thankfully. I’ve also had a pair of dentures make their way through here.” She waved at them as they walked off.

They found a quiet place to talk and Percy handed two thousand dollars to Nico. “As agreed upon, your half.”

Nico looked down at his armful of cash and sighed. “Damnit.”

“I think you’ll make a lovely flower girl, babe.” Will said, earning him Nico’s famous death glare. Will just gave him a smooch on the cheek.

Grover reluctantly took his portion of the shared money from Nico. “I can’t believe this. Annabeth is *actually* going to kill us, you do know that right, Percy? And Piper’s just gonna make us stand there while she does it.”

“That’s a problem for sober Jason and Percy. But right now, drunk Jason and Percy are going to find a nice chapel to get married in.” Percy said, and it reminded Jason that he was very much not that drunk any more. Percy pulled his bottle of alcohol out of his back pocket, and Jason thought that was a very good idea so he opened his too and they drank.

A wonderful idea floated in on the wave of intoxication that followed. “Percy.”

“Hmm?” Percy asked distractedly while he tried to fit as much money as he could into his wallet.

“Percy, let's make this official.”

“Make what official?” Percy gave up on trying to cram the last few bills into his wallet and just shoved them into his pocket next to it.

“Us. Together.”

Percy gave him an odd look, as did the others. “That’s…the plan. We’re getting married.”

“Yeah, no, I know that. I meant like…Olympus official. Get approval from Juno and have her officiate it.”

Percy’s face lit up. “You have the best ideas tonight. How do we do that?”

Their friends were not as supportive of that plan.

“That’s not a good-” Grover choked on his words.

“No, absolutely no-” Leo coughed and put a hand to his throat and Frank wisely closed his mouth before he voiced whatever it was he had to say.

Nico stood there miserably watching them. “It’s no use. Part of the deal was we won’t say anything negative about them getting married all night.”

Coach Hedge shook his head while he stuffed his own share of the money into his fanny pack. “Well alright then, let’s go attend a wedding.”

“Uh, how are you gonna contact Hera, though?” Will asked as he rubbed soothing circles into his boyfriend’s back.

Jason smirked and held up the *drachma* . “Why, we’re going to IM her of course.”

They all crowded into one of the men’s restrooms in the casino and Leo produced a *Sorry, Closed For Repairs* sign from his tool belt and stuck it on the outside of the door to keep people away. Percy went to one of the sinks lining the wall and waved his hand over it. The faucet turned on and water arced from it, jumping over the gap between the sinks and landing in the one next to it. Leo handed a crystal to Frank who was tall enough to hold it up to the mini chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

The water arc lit up like a rainbow as the crystal threw prismatic colors around the bathroom. Percy nodded and took his hand again.

Jason took a deep breath and flicked the coin into the water. “Queen Juno, goddess of marriage and family, please.”

The rainbow flickered like an old T.V. right before it caught a station. A soft humming filtered through it as the image sharpened, revealing Juno. Which was great, she was exactly who he had asked for, except for the fact that she was sitting in a bathtub, completely nude and surrounded by bubbles. Someone gasped, he wasn’t sure who. It could have been him, or it could have been all of them.

The humming stopped abruptly and Juno looked up, noticing the IM for the first time. All was silent. A rubber ducky wearing a plastic top hat floated by. Grover fainted.

Jason didn’t think he’d ever heard a goddess scream before.

Chapter End Notes

I've had a few people ask for a scene in which Percy tops and all I can say to that is: all good things to those who wait. This story isn't over yet!

Revelations? Maybe?

Chapter Notes

Have a lil' Leo POV. As a treat. And as plot development.

Also, if you happen to notice that I start answering all the comments at once, know that it's because I've either just finished writing the next chapter or am currently writing it in another open tab.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Meanwhile- *Argo II* Dining Room-

Leo's POV

Nico shoved a handful of crackers into his mouth. "So anyways, as I was saying, Annabeth and Piper said that they already knew Percy and Jason got hitched last night."

Next to him Frank shuffled in his seat, fingers lightly tapping on the table. "I just...I don't know, I have a hard time believing that. How did they know?"

The son of Hades paused his chewing, tilting his head to the side. "No clue actually, they didn't say. I didn't talk to them for very long, you know that. It was maybe two minutes."

"Is that all they said?" Leo asked. Nico shook his head and ate another handful of Cheez-Its. Leo tried not to scream. "Well what *else* did they say? What did they want you to tell them?" He pointed with his thumb at the newlyweds.

Nico finished swallowing his snack and picked up his cup, taking a long drink before answering. “Well I already told them part of it. They wanted us to hurry back. But…” He bit his lip and a flash of guilt crossed his face. “But they also wanted me to tell them they weren’t mad and to not feel bad or anything. That they understood.”

Nico’s hand crept inside the box again and Leo lost his patience, leaning across the table to grab the Cheez-Its from him. He was so unsuspecting of it he didn’t resist, the box came away easily. Leo sat in his chair and set the box down on the table with a *smack!* It was a little too forceful and a single cracker jumped out and landed next to the two unconscious men. Percy snorted, “Gettin’ married!” and then went quiet again. Will exhaled through his nose in amusement.

“Dude. My crackers. What the fuck?” Nico said, hands in the same position as if he still held the box. There was a single orange square in one of them. He closed his fist around it and pulverized it into dust, letting the crumbs fall through his fingers to land on the table.

“You didn’t think to *start* with that part, Nico?!” Leo said. “Why didn’t you tell them that in the hotel?” Nico opened his mouth but Frank was faster.

“They’ve been beating themselves up about this all morning! They’re *miserable,* and they’re *mad* at eachother, and they think their girlfriends are going to be worse.” Frank angrily picked up the Cheez-Its after his outburst and crammed a handful in his mouth. Nico stared at them mournfully.

“I was gonna tell them after they woke up this time, I swear.” NIco mumbled, one hand coming up to play with his eyebrow piercing. “I was just...still a little upset about the whole rigged bet thing. It was dirty and cheap, and Percy knew that. I know him and Jason were drunk, but-”

At the sound of his name Jason twitched and murmured, “Chairs aren’t sexy…” Everyone stared at him in bewilderment.

“Anyways…” Nico continued, looking away from Jason. “I promise, I had already planned on telling them the rest of it after breakfast, especially since...whatever the fuck that was in the hallway happened.”

“It’s true,” Will backed him up. “he told me about it in our room. If he didn’t, I would have.”

“Still, you-” Leo started but Grover cut him off.

“Wait, wait, wait.” Grover leaned forward and tapped his index finger aggressively on the table, as if he was trying to make a point. “ *Why* weren’t they mad? The girls. Why were they so understanding? It doesn’t make sense.” He sat back and folded his arms together, his furrowed brows making his bald scalp wrinkle up around the base of his horns. “I’ve known Annabeth to blow up over smaller things than this before.”

Nico put his hands up in defense. “Hey, I’m just telling you what they told me. I don’t know anything past that.”

Coach Hedge grunted. “There’s a lot about this that don’t make no sense. We can hope it all comes back quickly for them, or…” The coach very exaggeratedly let his eyes fall on the wedding album laying innocently above Percy and Jason’s heads.

“Oh, Coach...I don’t know...that feels kinda invasive…” Frank said uncomfortably.

The room was silent for about four seconds and then Leo, Nico, and Grover were reaching for the book at the same time. Even though Leo was closer Nico got there first. He pulled it towards their end of the table, scattering his desiccated cracker in the process, and turned it so it was facing them all. He took one breath and flipped the cover open.

" *Ouch* !" Or tried to. The second he slipped his fingers under it with the intention of opening it, the cover burned with a brief red glow around the part he touched and Nico jerked his fingers back, hissing in pain. "What the *fuck* ?"

"I knew this was a bad idea." Frank mumbled.

"Did it just *burn* you?" Leo asked Nico. He nodded, flicking his hand back and forth like he was trying to shake off the pain. "Hmmm. Well, I'm fireproof so…" Leo slowly reached over and slid his fingers under the lip of the cover. The book stayed how it was, no flash of red.

" *Leo!* " Frank hissed, grabbing his arm so he couldn't open it. "We're obviously not supposed to look in there. If something hurts you when you touch it, the next logical step isn't to *touch it again,* it's to *leave it alone.* Percy and Jason were already uncomfortable with showing these pictures to us. We shouldn't go behind their backs like this."

Leo chewed his lip and thought it over. He did feel bad about doing this without Jason knowing, but at the same time the sooner the puzzle pieces fell into place the better. Percy and Jason were dragging their feet about this, wanting to wait until tomorrow to see the next page. If things kept going how they were, with them blacking out after seeing one page each time, Leo estimated that they wouldn't even be close to finished any time soon. This book had at least fifteen pages in it. The *Argo II* would reach camp the day after tomorrow if they flew straight there and didn't stop at all, which is probably the best plan, but the boys most likely wouldn't have all their memories back by then if they kept insisting on pacing this out. Even if Nico says the girls aren't mad at them for what they did, Leo still didn't want his

friend to have to face a million questions and not have the answers to them.

He slowly pressed up with his fingers on the cover and Frank took his hand away with a disappointed look. A warmth started up in his fingertips and the book flashed red again. An intense stinging sensation shot through his hand. He pulled it back quickly, sucking in a sharp breath through his teeth. “Okay, well, so much for that. Anyone got any better ideas?”

Will cleared his throat and hunched over to rest his elbows on the table. “It’s not really an idea, more of an observation, but seeing those pictures on the first page earlier...it got me thinking. So from what we understand, when they see something familiar it triggers a memory about that thing, right?” Will waited until everyone nodded before continuing. “So we can safely assume they're reliving the part of the night from the hotel bar to the first casino. They’re going to see the first time-at least as far as we know-that they kissed. I think by now most of us have at least the majority of our memories back that were clouded by the Vitae, right?” More nods. “But the problem is, none of us were around them at the bar before all the crazy started, and they took off for most of the night with the guy from the biker gang. So whatever went on between them is still a mystery to everyone here until they get their memories back, which for some reason is taking significantly longer for them.”

“Okay, but I don’t see how this is helpful though. We already know all of that, what’s your point, Will?” Grover said, holding his hand out for the Cheez-It box that Frank was passing to him.

Will put up a placating hand and said, “Now hold on, I’m gettin’ to that part.” Nico shuffled around in his seat so he was facing his boyfriend while he talked. “Like I said, the memory they’re going through got me thinking about what they said in the bar. What *Percy* said, specifically, when they were trying to convince us to go along with their insane plan.”

Frank looked at Will skeptically. “They said a lot in the bar. What part are you-” he stopped suddenly and his eyes got wide. “Oh, damn. You think...yeah that would make sense why the girls weren’t mad about it! You think they really *did* break up with them before we came to Vegas. It would explain a lot, actually.”

“Okay, alright, let’s back up for a minute.” Leo said. He pointed at Will. “ *You* said that Percy was lying when he said that last night. You were absolutely sure of it, so why now all of a sudden are you saying you believe him?” He felt his voice start to edge on the side of hurt, but he couldn’t help it.

The box of crackers crinkled loudly as Grover’s hand crushed the part he was holding. He shook his head while he said, “Percy *wasn’t* telling the truth. I *know* that. You’re wrong, Will.”

“I’m not done explaining why-”

Nico cut him off, fixing both Leo and Grover with firm looks. “Why are you denying this so hard? It would be better for everyone if they did break up before they kissed, because it would mean they didn’t really cheat on anyone. Are you-” He stopped for a second, his eyebrows raising up. Leo shifted in his seat. “You two are just upset that if Will is right and they did break up with Piper and Annabeth, then they didn’t tell you about it. You’re mad they didn’t let you know before they went to each other. You’re jealous of your best friends’ other friend.”

“It doesn’t make sense!” Grover shouted, tossing the box onto the table. Nico quickly scooped it up and cradled it protectively against his chest. “Percy wouldn’t tell *Jason* about it before me! *I’m* his best friend, and he and Annabeth said nothing, *nothing,* to me about it. If they actually did, then I’d know. So it’s not true.”

Leo nodded along with him. “Piper and Jason…there’s no way one of them wouldn’t tell me about a breakup if there had been one. Jason tells me *everything* , okay? Just because he has that…that…stupid ‘bro’ himbo bullshit with Percy doesn’t mean he’d go to him and not me! There’s no reason Jason would have broken up with Piper, there was nothing wrong between them, they aren’t like-”

Grover slapped the table. “They aren’t like *who,* Leo?” He demanded.

“ *Himbo?”* Coach Hedge muttered under his breath in confusion.

Leo didn’t even know why he felt jilted, it’s not like he had a monopoly on Jason’s friendship. But to imply that he’d broken up with Piper was to imply that they were having problems. Which meant that Leo had been in the dark about the issues his friends had been dealing with. Had Jason not felt comfortable enough with Leo to talk about it? Had he felt comfortable enough with Percy to talk to *him* about it instead? Leo liked Percy, he was super nice, always funny, extremely kind, and just an all around good guy. He didn’t have anything against him, but that didn’t stop him from feeling like his best friend position was being threatened.

“Like Percy and Annabeth, Grover. Don’t act like you don’t see how bad they are for each other.”

“Oh, and like your friends are any better? Their whole relationship is based on a *lie* Hera put inside Piper’s head! They have no previous interactions to build on, but Piper wanted to try anyway because she missed what never really happened! Does that sound like a *healthy* relationship to you, Leo? Because from the outside it looks pretty strange. How do we even know Jason wanted to stay in that fake relationship? What if he only did it to make Piper happy and now he regrets it?”

Leo narrowed his eyes at the satyr. The others watched him and Grover arguing in silence. Nico ate a Cheez-It. “How do you know so much about that? They don’t like to talk-” A thought suddenly occurred to him, and it only did because he’d had to listen to Jason whine numerous times about how unhappy he thought Percy was with his girlfriend. “Did...did Percy tell you that? That sounds like something he would say, Grover, because you don’t like to pry into other people's business. And even if you did, I know you well enough to know that you wouldn’t bring it up. That’s not *your* opinion...that’s what *Percy* thinks about Piper and Jason. Isn’t it?” Now it was his turn to demand.

The guilty look on Grover’s face told him all he needed to know. So. So what? Percy was entitled to his own opinion. Even if it was wrong. But it made Leo wonder...what exactly had Jason told him that made Percy think that way? For all Leo knew, everything was great between his two best friends. They hadn’t done anything to make it seem any different.

“Jason is *my* best friend. Why did he talk to Percy about Piper and not me?” Leo asked.

“ *How should I know, Leo?”* Grover said, frustrated.

“Girls, please, you’re both pretty and we can have the custody battle over the kids later, okay? Why don’t you let WIll finish what he was trying to say before you start jumping to conclusions.” Nico finally spoke up, waving a cracker about.

“Ta-da…” mumbled Jason.

“ *Thank you,* Jason.” Nico said, tossing his cracker up in the air and catching it in his mouth.

"... *really* hot." Percy said in his sleep.

Nico choked on his Cheez-It and wheezed out a laugh.

Leo sighed heavily, sitting back in his chair, and Grover begrudgingly did the same. He gestured for Will to continue.

"Thank you. As I was saying, Percy *was* telling a lie. *But.* Something...I don't know, something felt off about it. Almost like there was some truth surrounding it. The *way* he phrased it made it ring as false. It was a truth disguised as a lie, if that makes any sense. I'm positive he was lying, but I'm not positive it wasn't the truth."

Leo rubbed his temples. "You're giving me a headache, Solace. Enough with the riddles, man, just say what you mean."

"Sorry, I'm not trying to be cryptic, it's just a little hard to describe how it feels to tell if someone is lying or not. But the gist of it is: Percy said, 'What if I told you we'd already broken up with them?' Think about it. *We* broke up with *them.* "

Frank's cheeks puffed out as he exhaled through tight lips. "So what you're saying is that you think the *girls* ended things before we left? And because Percy tried to make it seem like it was he and Jason that did it, you picked it up as a lie. That's what you're getting at?"

Will drummed his fingers on the table, his eyes fixed on the two unconscious bodies slumped over next to Leo. "Yeah. Yeah, that's what I think."

Nico voluntarily set the Cheez-Its down, licking the orange powder off fingers before saying, “I mean, it seems unlikely but it’s not out of the realm of possibilities. Two guys who've just been dumped want to forget their pain for a night and decide to get drunk to do it, even though they normally wouldn’t. Things get a little too out of hand and their grieving brains latch onto each other and give them the stupid idea to get married. Boom, boom, boom, all the boxes checked, mystery solved.”

They were all silent for a good stretch of time while this theory floated around. Leo didn’t like it. What he disliked more was that it really did explain a lot. Some things still didn’t quite add up though, and they weren’t small things either. “But they don’t know that.” Everyone looked at Leo. “Or, they don’t remember that. Percy and Jason. If it happened before we left for Vegas, then it stands to reason that they would know about it. But you both saw their faces this morning when we woke them up and they realized what they’d done. Percy thought it was Annabeth he married. They have to be together still, there isn’t any other explanation. They definitely aren’t faking how upset and ashamed they are and they really seem to think they fucked up and cheated. We’re back to square one again.”

“Well I don’t know, okay? I’m just telling you what I think. Why else would Piper and Annabeth be so chill about this fucking mess? The guys didn’t even remember that they were *in* Vegas when they woke up. They have no memories of ever leaving Camp Half-Blood, so it’s very possible the break up happened *after* the amnesia starts.” Will said.

Leo still wasn’t on board. He just couldn’t imagine that happening. “There’s no *way-*”

Will threw his hands up in frustration. “I’m just as irritated and confused as you, Leo. If you have a better theory, I’d love to be-Frank?”

For a second Leo thought, *he'd love to be frank about what?* But then he realized Will was looking at the actual Frank, who was staring hard and horrified at the wedding album. "Hey, you okay?"

Frank blinked and slowly shook his head. "Yeah, no, I'm...no I'm not, because I...I just-" He tapped his foot rapidly against the floor, his face pale. Nico slid the box of Cheez-Its across the table. Frank robotically picked them up and stuck his hand in it. "That wasn't me." He said before pulling out a single cracker and munching down on it.

"Uhhhhh…what wasn't?" Leo asked, tentatively putting a hand on Frank's shoulder, not wanting to spook him.

" *In the bar.* Last night." He clarified, finally looking up from the book.

Nico spared a glance over at Jason and Percy and then shared a look with Will. "You mean the rage that had those two squaring up for a fight with me? *That* wasn't you?"

Frank swallowed hard. "That's right, it wasn't. I thought maybe I had accidentally...you know because of the alcohol, and so I kinda let it go and just accepted that it was me. But I was going over it again a-and I'm positive I had nothing to do with it. I wasn't angry last night, just shocked, I had no reason to antagonize a fight. Guys I...I think my *dad* was in that bar."

Grover chuckled nervously. "The Roman god of war was...you think that he just so happened to be hanging out in the same building in Las Vegas as us? That's *some* coincidence."

"Unless it wasn't a coincidence." Will said. Next to him Nico shuddered and tucked himself up against his boyfriend's side. Will put

an arm around his shoulders and held him close.

Coach Hedge spoke up for the first time in a while. “This whole thing stinks of godly interference. I don’t usually like to butt into your kid’s going-ons but I have to agree with Zhang over there. I thought I smelt something last night that wasn’t quite right but with all you little demigods around it’s hard to smell anything but your powers. And you know, Vegas just stinks in general.” the coach wrung his hands together. “I hate to be the one to say this, but...if Frank’s dad really was present then there’s a high possibility that the love goddess was as well. Where she is, he’s not far behind. This isn’t a scenario I want to be correct about but we can’t disregard it. She was at the wedding, she gave them her blessing, and this *is* a situation that revolves around relationships.”

“But then why would Hera approve their marriage request if they were only under some...some love spell or whatever. Because that *is* what you’re implying, right Gleeson?” Grover asked. Hedge nodded. “Hera’s bonds are supposed to be for like, pure and true marriages. For people who are actually in love. She’s all about that, isn’t she? The perfect couple. Not…” His eyes flicked over to Percy and Jason.

Percy’s fingers twitched, his wedding ring clicking against the wood, and he mumbled, “Two aces…want to impress him...”

A muscle in Jason’s eyebrow ticked. “...don’t like the way they look at him…”

“They’re cute.” Will commented, putting his free hand over his heart.

Grover spluttered at him. “They’re not *cute.* They’re possessed by some freaky love magic mumbo jumbo! And when they find that out, they’re going to go ballistic. Percy will not hesitate to fight a god, he’s done it before! *Especially* if Ares and Aphrodite are involved, they

don't exactly have a squeaky clean record if you know what I mean. Not to mention the fact that Hera's got *her* magic all tangled up in this too. Guys this is *really bad."*

Leo subconsciously started pulling little bits of metal and connectors out of his tool belt to give his hands a task to do. Something cold and plasticky bumped against his fingers. Curious, he grabbed the object and set it on the table next to his scrap metal. A rubber ducky wearing a top hat stared blankly back at him with it's soulless, beady little eyes. So that's where he'd put that.

He picked up the metal and let his hands go on autopilot. "So, crazy idea time. If their feelings for each other *are* fabricated by Piper's mother, which is not going to win her any mom of the year awards by the way, then the marriage is a sham. Assuming Hera was in the dark about her involvement, she wouldn't be too happy about learning she was tricked into approving a marriage that was never going to happen naturally, right?" He didn't bother waiting for an answer, too eager to get his idea out. "Now, I know the bond is supposed to be permanent since they had…" His fingers fumbled over a piece of wiring, "uh, since it was consummated… *But* ! What if Hera found out about Aphrodite's spell? Hm? Anyone? No? Okay, well here's my thoughts: we tell her they don't really love each other and that it's all just false feelings. We tell her the *truth* . She's obviously against divorce but maybe she'll make an exception this one time once she learns what really happened."

Grover sat forward, interested. "That's not a crazy idea, Leo. That's a really smart plan."

"I do have them occasionally, I'm told."

"Seriously, Leo. This might be the loophole we need to help them. If we can get Hera to dissolve this thing...Percy and Jason would be so grateful. W-we can do this for them! Hera's not a stranger to memory theft, so maybe we can convince her to help them remember

everything too!"

Coach Hedge held up a hand. "Woah, woah, woah. Why not just wait for them to wake up, tell them what we figured out, and let *them* go to her and ask?"

Grover rolled his eyes at the coach. "Did you miss the part about Percy and how he's always ready to throw down with a celestial being? We tell them about the love magic and they're gonna be *pissed,* and knowing my best friend, he'll try to take his anger out on the first immortal he sees. Stabbing the queen of the gods will not earn him any sympathy points from her. And Jason would probably help him, no questions asked. But...if *we* do it, it might make up for the fact that we let them go through with everything last night. I-I know it wasn't all our fault but I can't help but feel that they blame us a little bit."

Leo paused in his tinkering. "Grover, did *you* want to get fried and drowned simultaneously? If we had pushed them any further it *would* have come to a fight. None of this is on us."

"I still feel guilty…"

"Hey, it's fine, we'll contact Juno and get this resolved before they even wake up, okay?" Frank said, looking optimistic for the first time since he mentioned his dad. "Everything will be back to normal. Well...Percy and Jason probably know a little more about each other than they ever wanted to, but you know...as normal as things can be."

Hedge groaned and picked up the box of crackers, taking a bite out of one of the flaps on top. "All in favor of fixing this mess Valdez's way?" Everyone but Hedge and Will raised their hand. "Very well. How do you propose we get her attention?"

Jason piped up in his sleep. “...gonna IM her of course.”

“Ah, yes, because that worked *so* well for us last time, Grace.” Hedge said sarcastically, but he held his out over the table nonetheless. “Anybody got a *drachma* ?”

Chapter End Notes

Oh man...the Scooby Doo gang is on the case. They mean well, really they do, but are they correct in their assumptions?

Also, Hera's rubber ducky ended up garnering much more attention than I thought it would. Y'all really love silly little inanimate objects don't ya?

Animals

-Flashback, Continued-Mirage Casino Bathroom-

Jason's POV

Juno's startled scream cut off abruptly and her face turned red, but there was no hint of embarrassment, just pure anger. She stood up from the soapy water brusquely, her naked body starting to glow. Jason had once made the mistake of watching the goddess dissolve into her true form and he wasn't eager to repeat that experience. He shut his eyes and turned his head right before a golden light flashed across his closed eyelids. Jason's scalp tingled and all the hair on his arms stood on end as the bathroom inside the Mirage was filled with a second flash of light. Even though his eyes were still shut he could feel the godly presence that had arrived. The fact that he was still alive was honestly a shock to him. He had just accidentally seen his father's wife in all her divine naked glory sitting in a bubble bath with a rubber ducky. Maybe she just wanted to slaughter them in person.

Slowly, he turned around to where the tense energy was radiating from and opened his eyes, bracing himself for the worst. He felt Percy's hand slip into his and Jason thought, *at least I'll die with him by my side.* On his other side, Coach Hedge had his baseball cap pulled down far enough to cover his eyes. Frank, Leo, Will, and Nico all had their hands over their faces and Grover was still on the floor, presumably passed out. Juno, who was now fully clothed in a smart business pantsuit and in the form of Hera, stood in front of the row of urinals, her lotus topped staff clenched tightly in her white-knuckle grip. Her glare combined with the snarl her lips were pulled into gave off so much intensity that he couldn't look directly into her eyes otherwise his own started to burn and water.

Hera pounded the base of her staff once on the tiles and the others reluctantly uncovered their eyes. Her entire focus was centered on him and Percy, which did not bode well. " *Explain the meaning of this."*

She growled through her teeth, " *before I disintegrate every single one of you."* She didn't shout or yell but the low threatening tone of her voice sent a trickle of icy fear down his spine.

They needed to fix this fast. "It was an accident!" He blurted out. The others nodded furiously with him, giving the impression of dashboard bobble heads over a road of speed bumps.

He tried not to shrink back under the weight of Hera's stare. "Jason Grace. Did you or did you not use the Iris Message with the intention of contacting me?"

"Okay, yes I did, but we didn't know you were nak-in the bath! We're very very sorry, your majesty, I promise we *did not* mean to see you like that."

Next to him Percy jumped in on the conversation. "We *definitely* don't want to see you naked. Like, never ever." Jason looked at him in disbelief as it suddenly dawned on Percy how bad that statement could be taken. He immediately tried to back peddle, taking his hand out of Jason's and raising them both in front of his body defensively, his face pale. "I-I mean not that you aren't worth seeing naked but I, oh fuck, I just meant that, uh...y-you're very beautiful! And...and...you have a very nice body-"

Jason elbowed him *hard* in the ribs and Percy jumped a bit. Hera's expression didn't change but the energy in the air doubled until it was so thick that it practically choked him when he tried to breath. "Percy, *shut up."* Percy did not shut up. In fact he kept going, trying to fix the awful phrasing he'd used.

"N-not that I'm hitting on you or anything, I'm actually engaged! That would be totally gross-UH, no, no *you're* not gross, like I said you're a very attractive woman, and it's a privilege to have, uh, s-seen you

naked, an *honor* really. I-" He grunted as Jason elbowed him again.

" *Knock it off,* you're making it *worse!"*

"-you're practically Jason's *step-mom* which, considering the circumstances, would be totally disgusting. Fuck! I'm not calling *you* disgusting or anything, just that I'd never want to fu-"

Hera slammed the butt of her staff into the tiles so hard they cracked. Percy disappeared in a cloud of white smoke that smelled faintly of lavender bubble bath soap.

" *Percy!"* He shouted in alarm. Out of the smoke a small dark shape fell from about shoulder height. A little furry otter smacked into the ground with a disgruntled squeak. " *Percy!?"*

Percy the otter scrambled to his feet, his midsection expanding and contracting rapidly as he panted, his head whipping around to look at all the people in the bathroom. He looked up at Jason with his round black eyes, his whiskers quivering with the motion of his twitching nose.

Leo leaped backwards in surprise. "Holy shit, what the-"

Boom!

"Leo!" Frank cried at the enormous colorful toucan that flopped around on the ground right where Leo had been standing half a second ago.

Boom! Boom, boom, boom, boom!

Hera pounded her staff over and over again, the cracks in the tile spider webbing outwards, and one by one his friends disappeared in puffs of lavender scented smoke. Frank the llama made a noise that sounded something like " *Mwa-a-a-a"* and scuttled back until his woolly rear bumped into a stall door. Percy the otter leaped about three feet into the air and ran behind Jason to quickly crawl up the pipes of the sink and dive under the spray of water. Coach Hedge, who was currently a bald sphinx cat, hissed at the drops that splattered across his back and swatted at more that came down. Grover's smoke dissipated and a large palomino horse lay sprawled across the floor, still asleep. The huge animal took up so much room that Frank the llama was forced to stay half in half out of a stall. On the other side of where Percy had been standing Will waddled around as a penguin and Nico clattered to the ground as a...jagged lump of some kind of green gem.

He thought he heard the goddess mutter something under her breath that sounded like, *"Ugh, Underworld children are so stubborn."*

Jason stood there, surrounded by various animals that had no place in a casino bathroom, in absolute shock. Hera took a step towards him and he flinched, expecting to poof into a peacock or something, but she just paused on the other side of Grover the horse when she could walk no further. "Animals," Hera started, "are much simpler than humans. I prefer their company, they are quieter and more well behaved." She eyed Percy, who had somehow pushed the sink stopper down and was peacefully floating on his back in the ever deepening pool of water. The IM still shimmered in the air between the two sinks and Leo the toucan kept flying through it trying to snatch up the rubber duck that floated lazily around the now vacant bath.

She turned her gaze back to Jason. "My hero." It wasn't said affectionately as much as it was said possessively. You are *my* hero, you *belong* to *me.* Jason always hated how she called him that, as if his entire existence was manifested in order to serve her. It grated on his nerves but he knew now was not the time to rebel against it. At the

moment, his friends were four mammals, two birds, and what appeared to be a large uncut emerald, and he was bound to be next if he made one more wrong move. “What is your purpose in disturbing me tonight? Your excuse better be worth my attention.” She didn’t have to specify what would happen if it wasn’t. He could use his imagination just fine.

“Well, Lady Hera,” He started, wringing his hands together. The fate of everyone in this room rested on his ability to placate the affronted goddess. No pressure. His best option was to tell the truth, because if she found out he was lying...well, he’d rather not have that happen. “I’m going to be completely honest with you. We called you to...request a...marriage...approval…?” He could’ve kicked himself. It sounded like he was trying to convince her of a lie, but in reality he was just nervous as hell. He’d expected Percy to be here with him when they talked to her about this but Percy was currently a sea mammal who was chittering happily in the sink behind him.

Hera stared at him, clearly unimpressed. She held her arms out, indicating everyone in the bathroom, and said, “A marriage request? To whom? Your girlfriend is nowhere to be seen, and both parties are required to be present in order for the bond to be created. Piper McLean must also express her desire for this. You did not contact me for my business purposes, Jason Grace, do not attempt to mislead me. One more false statement and I shall lose what little patience I have left.”

“No, no, no, no! I’m not lying!” He said quickly. “I promise, I-I swear on...I swear on the Styx!” Hera eyed him carefully, as if she was waiting for the ground to open up and swallow him down for swearing a lie on the Styx. When nothing but a gentle, sulfur smelling breeze blew through the room she reluctantly gestured for him to continue. “Okay,” He breathed a sigh of relief before talking again, “okay, here’s what happened. We threw the coin into the rainbow and asked for you. The IM went to static for a few seconds before showing you.”

“That is because direct IM’s are supposed to be blocked unless I permit

them. The only exception is...ah, yes well that...I suppose that makes sense. The message will get pushed through if it's an urgent business call. For example, a marriage request. I take those very seriously, genuine bonds are so rare these days. Continue, Jason Grace." Hedge the cat hopped up onto Grover the horse and spun in a slow circle before settling down on his massive shoulder. Behind Jason the sink started to overflow and the resulting waterfall cascaded down to splash against the tiles and run off into the floor drain that was conveniently set under that sink.

"That's, uh, pretty much it."

She regarded him coolly, crossing her arms over her chest which made her staff stick out about four feet to the right. Frank the llama sniffed it and sneezed. "I believe you are telling the truth, hero. However, as I mentioned before, without both halves of the union present, nothing can be settled. You have disturbed my privacy and peace for nothing."

"Oh, both of us *are* here. I'm not marrying Piper, sorry for not clearing that up earlier. I'm marrying Percy." He pointed over his shoulder at the sink. Hera reared her head back in surprise and her eyes flicked over to look at Percy, who was currently trying to pry the cold water knob off the faucet with his tiny little otter paws. Apparently frustrated that he couldn't take the knob, Percy the otter batted at it and squeaked in outrage before catching sight of himself in the mirror. He froze and then hunched down and his reflection did the same. With no warning he lunged at himself and both otters spent a good few minutes swatting at each other, Percy's nails *click click clicking* against the glass. It was...absurdly cute.

The goddess raised one eyebrow skeptically as if to say, *really? That one? Out of all the people on the planet, and you choose* him *?* But what she actually said aloud was, "I do not get the joke."

"That's...because I'm not joking." He said, letting his hands fall to hang by his sides. "Why does everyone think that?"

“It is believed that you are in a romantic relationship with that daughter of Aphrodite, and Perseus Jackson with one of Athena’s. Perhaps that’s the reason? I could name a few others, if you wish.” She said, obviously still in doubt. “I grow tired of this conversation, Jason Grace.”

“I don’t know what else to tell you. I swore on the Styx, I told you why we contacted you. It’s pretty cut and dry.”

“Little hero, this is anything but. You would have me believe that you, a son of Jupiter, intends to marry him,” She pointed her staff at Percy who was baring his fangs at the reflection of himself in the mirror, “a son of Poseidon? Something like this has never happened before, I assure you. It upsets the natural balance, two children of the Big Three together as you are implying. No, I will not accept this explanation, it’s too unfounded. Your request, with whatever little truth may cling to it, is denied.”

“With all due respect, Lady Hera, that’s bullshit. You can’t just deny it because you don’t like it.”

The air grew heavy again with the goddess’ anger. Penguin Will squawked and shuffle-walked across the floor as fast as he could to take refuge under a sink. Along the way, one of his webbed feet bumped into Nico the probably emerald and sent him skittering a few inches away. An interested little chirp sounded out behind him and Jason got a very bad feeling right before Otter Percy leaped off the sink in the direction of the rock.

“Percy, no!” He reprimanded him, but the otter landed in a crouch and bounded over a horse leg, his beady little eyes fixed on the green gem. Hedge the cat arched his back and hissed as Percy flew by and launched himself after the otter. “Coach Hedge!” Jason ducked as a brightly colored toucan wing buffeted the air above his head as Leo

also turned his attention on the shiny rock he'd just noticed. "Gods, please, everybody just *stop!"*

Will saw Percy coming and turned, changing the direction of his waddle to go after the rock. Percy's nimble otter reflexes allowed him to reach it first and he scooped it up, tucking it under his arm while he skidded to a stop. He turned on a dime and jumped over Cat Hedge right as the feline reached out to claw at him. Llama Frank trotted in his stall nervously as the other animals started chittering, hissing, and squawking at each other. Jason stood trapped on the other side of Grover the unconscious horse watching the cat and the penguin try to assault the otter while Toucan Leo flew in circles above, occasionally dive bombing the three on the ground.

Jason tugged at his hair in distress and worry, hoping that none of them got too seriously injured. "Would you guys please just- *Percy let go of Hedge right now!* Leo drop that! Gods, Will don't *bite-peck?-* him. No... *NO!"* Jason backed up quickly, his back bumping into the wet sink, as Percy turned and leaped over Grover, probably on his way back to the safety of the water. The only problem was that Jason happened to be directly in his path. Hera watched impassively as the otter reached him and immediately scrambled up his pant leg trying to get away from his pursuers.

Luckily Percy's otter claws didn't break through his jeans. He was only able to reach knee height before Jason reached down and scooped him up into his arms. When he moved to do that Cat Hedge got spooked and gave up his pursuit to grumpily hop up onto the horse again. This did not, however, deter the penguin, who was apparently very upset at 'his' rock being taken. Jason wasn't sure if this was some small part of Will's human affection for Nico coming through or if it was the penguin's natural proclivity to hoard pretty rocks. Either way, he waddled over and managed to work his way up and then down the horse legs in front of him. Toucan Leo flew in circles still but he'd ceased the air raids for now, which Jason was immensely thankful for. Getting pelted by a huge beak was not something he was keen on.

The otter in his arms squirmed and wriggled, his slick little body hard

to hold onto, while he chirped and chittered happily. Will finally reached him but on account of him being a flightless bird and with no phalanges to climb with, could only tug angrily on Jason's pant leg with his beak. Percy noticed him and flopped backwards to partially hang over Jason's arms. He almost dropped him. The otter took Nico out and dangled him over the penguin, making little barking sounds that were probably otter laughter. " *Percy,* do not do that." He tried to use one hand to pull him back up but Percy nipped playfully at his fingers and he quickly withdrew them, eyeing the sharp white fangs. "Just *hang on* a minute, Will, I'll-"

Everyone froze as the bathroom door opened. Jason looked up in horror at the maintenance guy who stood in the doorway with Leo's out of order sign in his hands. The man's face was completely neutral as he looked around at the fucking zoo this bathroom had become. His gaze flicked to the overflowing sink, down to the cracked tiles, up the godly form of Hera, and finally over to Jason, who had an upside down otter in his arms and a penguin latched onto his jeans. His bushy mustache twitched a few times before he nodded respectfully at Jason. "I'll just give you another ten minutes then." He replaced the out of order sign and closed the door behind him.

He didn't really have time to contemplate what just happened because as soon as the latch clicked Percy the otter heaved himself back up and rolled over in Jason's arms so he was belly up. He let out a small chitter before suddenly putting on about a hundred and seventy five pounds as he poofed back into Human Percy. Jason stumbled forwards at the unexpected weight and the surprise of having an adult male cradled in his arms bridal style.

Percy looked around, panting heavily, the emerald still in his hands. He held it up slowly and examined it. "W-what is this?" He asked, eyes flicking up to lock with his.

"That's, uh, Nico." He said, still trying to compute everything.

Percy quickly looked back down at the rock. He changed his grip on it to a more gentle one. “ *Nico?”* He whispered quietly.

Boom!

Hera’s staff connected with the floor and Percy was an otter once more. He took Nico out from under his arm and turned him around a few times before replacing him and clamoring up Jason’s chest to spring off his shoulder. A large splash that completely drenched the back of his shirt told him that he’d landed in the sink again. He looked over his shoulder at him.

“Hera, *please* turn them back. This isn’t their fault. I- *Percy!”* Percy dunked Nico a few times in the pool, turning him over, inspecting him for dirt. Alarmed, he turned back to the goddess who, for all intents and purposes, looked slightly amused. “He can’t drown right?”

“I certainly hope not, he’s an otter. They’re aquatic.” She said, reaching down to rub the cat between his ears.

“No not the-not the fucking *otter,* I meant *Nico!”*

Hera straightened up, giving him a quizzical look. “He’s currently an emerald, so...no. Rocks cannot suffocate.”

Oh, like he was supposed to just *know* that a human-turned-rock was drown proof. Sometimes he really hated gods and their assumptions that everything was common knowledge. Still, he felt marginally better that Percy wouldn’t unwittingly kill Nico. He heaved a heavy sigh.

“Oh, better watch out, little hero.” Hera said, pointing at something behind him.

He turned to see Percy perched in a crouch on the edge of the sink, eyeing him intensely. His furry butt started to wiggle. Jason had seen enough of the cat videos Leo always showed him to know that he was about to pounce. “Oh, *come on!”* He exclaimed as the excitable otter collided with his chest. Jason protectively cradled his arms underneath him so he wouldn’t fall.

Percy squirmed around like he had before but this time he latched onto his shirt with his paws and rubbed his head all over the side of Jason’s neck. His coarse whiskers tickled him a bit but when he reached over to push his little head away, Percy nipped at his fingers again and kept wiggling around, nuzzling into him. Hera watched this with growing interest, her eyebrows coming down in thought.

“What is he doing?” He asked her. At the sound of his voice Percy released his grip on his shirt and slithered around to lay belly up. He reached under his arm and delicately held Nico The Emerald above him, his round shiny eyes fixed on Jason’s face. “Um…thank you?” He readjusted his grip on Percy so he was holding him with one arm so he could take Nico from him. Before he could pull the rock away, Percy wrapped his cold paws around Jason’s hand. He subtly moved the rock so it was in the palm of his hand with his pinkie and ring finger holding it in place. Percy bared his fangs at him but instead of growling or barking, he started to gently nibble and nip at his hand and fingers. His teeth were sharp but they never bit down hard enough to break skin and for the moment it seemed like the otter had forgotten about the emerald, so he didn’t force his hand away. He looked up and almost screamed because Hera was standing directly in front of him.

She rubbed a finger on Percy’s head and he stopped nipping long enough to hiss at her before returning to his task of…whatever he was doing. Surprisingly, Hera didn’t get angry at the slight. Instead, she smiled softly. “Otters,” She said, taking a step back, “are very interesting creatures. Like penguins, they often have an obsession with

rocks. An otter will sometimes find the perfect one for cracking open clams. They use them as tools, you see. They're very intelligent. This 'perfect rock' becomes their favorite rock and they store it in the pouches under their arms for future use. Otters are not monogamous creatures, however during mating season it's entirely possible for a male otter to become so infatuated with a potential mate that he will present them with his favorite rock. This is an attempt at showing his affections, a gift of sorts. Otters will only give their rocks to another who catches their attention completely."

"Oh, um, that's very...sweet?" He said. Jason was positive that Nico would be furious at being used as an otter...proposal ring of sorts. If Nico didn't remember his time as a rock when he turned back, Jason vowed to himself right then and there that this moment would stay with him and only him until the grave. "So what you're saying is that this otter is, uh," He cleared his throat, "asking to mate with me?"

"That's precisely what I'm saying. This otter is still, at its core, Perseus Jackson, son of Poseidon. His thoughts and feelings are still there, they're simply transmuted and outputted in a way his otter brain can understand." Hera sighed and regarded them both some more. "Alright, Jason Grace. I rescind my previous judgment. I will grant your request, only if Jackson, as a human, also desires this."

"What? Just...just like that? Because Percy gave me this rock to hold?" No, there had to be a catch somewhere. Nothing *ever* worked the way it was supposed to. Although...one could argue that it had already gone awry. Horse Grover whinnied softly in his sleep to emphasize his point.

"We shall see." She said cryptically, taking another step away from him and lightly tapping her staff on the floor.

Percy poofed back into a human but this time he was a little more prepared for it and braced himself for the additional weight. Wide green eyes looked up at him in surprise and then they flicked down,

making him go a little crossed eyed, as he tried to see what his teeth were closed around.

"Can I have that back, please?" Jason asked, somewhat amused and enamored despite the current circumstances. However if he didn't set him down or start using his other arm to support his weight soon, he'd probably drop him.

Percy released his finger and Jason helped him stand up. "What just happened? Why was...why were you holding me? Why is Nico a rock? A-and why...oh my gods are these animals our *friends?"*

An incessant tugging on his jeans made him look down. Will was still waddling around his feet angrily. Jason knelt down and placed Nico on the ground in front of the penguin. "There you go. Sorry about that, Will." Will shuffled the rock up onto his feet and walked away with it to go stand next to Grover and Hedge. Leo flew over and landed on Frank's back. Jason stood up and ran a hand through his hair, starting to feel like maybe this situation was turning around.

"Will?" Percy said, looking at the penguin.

"Yeah, that's Will. The toucan is Leo, the llama is Frank, Hedge is the cat, and Grover is, well, the horse in the middle of the floor." He gestured to each one of their friends as he introduced them to Percy. "And you were an otter."

" *An otter?* " Percy opened his mouth like he wanted to say more but couldn't find the words for it. Then his eyes landed on Hera and his jaw snapped shut, his confused face turning hard and angry in a split second. Jason's stomach dropped. "You- *mmpf!* "

This time Jason didn't stick with a simple elbow to the ribs, he sidled

up behind Percy and wrapped an arm around his chest, pinning Percy's arms to his sides and covering his mouth with his free hand. He pulled him up against his own chest so he couldn't move around too much. The glare he received from his fiancé was murderous and promised revenge later, but to Jason's surprise he didn't try to get free. He'd expected him to struggle like he had when Frank grabbed him earlier, but now he just stood there, tense and fuming, while Jason kept him quiet and restrained. Percy probably knew his mouth would get them in even worse shit than it already had, but didn't trust himself not to say anything.

Jason smiled innocently at Hera. "So, as you were saying…" He said.

Hera's disdain for Percy was no secret, just as it was no secret that Percy in turn hated her just as much. Now, the two faced off in a silent stare-down. He half expected a tumbleweed to blow through the room. She looked them both up and down. He felt Percy's jaw working like he was itching to say some very choice words, but he still didn't try to free himself. After what seemed like hours, Hera finally said, "Percy Jackson. I've heard your purpose for contacting me tonight, and after some discussion with Jason, I have agreed to grant that request." If by discussion she meant calmly watching the chaos that had ensued as a result of her meddling, then yeah. Really riveting discussion. "All I need is your verbal confirmation as well." She stopped talking and gave Percy a pointed look. When nothing happened she added, "Jason, I do believe mortals require the unobstructed use of their mouth in order to speak."

"Ah, yeah, sorry." He fixed Percy with a stern stare. "Are you going to behave?"

Percy mumbled something that sounded like, "Hmm mpf mming hm mmphve?" and then nodded his head yes.

"You know, mocking me is not going to make me believe you. Do you want to be an otter again? Because that's what's going to happen if

you can't." Jason said. Percy narrowed his eyes at him in another glare. "You made an adorable otter. It was especially cute when you were attacking your reflection in the mirror, I wouldn't mind seeing it again." Percy made an indignant grunt and his eyes went wide while a pink blush blossomed across his cheeks, turning the skin under his hand extremely warm. "So, are you going to *behave*?" He got an eye roll and a partial nod in return so he took his hand away from his mouth.

Percy huffed and looked away from him to address Hera. "Yes. I want it too."

She tsked and shook her head in disbelief. "Alright then, I need each of you to hold out a hand, palm up, please." Jason released the man in his arms all the way and stepped up to stand beside him again. In sync they did as she asked. She pulled something out from an inner pocket of her blazer, and when the light caught on it he realized it was a very slim knife. "Hold still." She held the knife up and pricked the tip into the center of their palms, drawing little beads of blood. It stung a bit but other than that nothing happened. Hera wiped the knife off on a handkerchief she took from the same pocket and then stored them both away. She passed her hand over their outstretched hands and two bronze rings manifested out of thin air and plopped down into the small drops of blood. She leaned forward and watched with rapt attention as the blood was absorbed into the metal and the small cuts healed themselves over.

Jason also watched, but with more confusion than anything, and Percy looked about the same. Jason's blood disappeared and the rings glowed softly before dimming. They lay in their hands, looking like ordinary wedding rings. "How very strange..." Hera muttered as she straightened up and plucked the rings from their hands. "Well that's it, then. The process has started. When the ceremony takes place pray to me and I will arrive to complete the union. Lady Aphrodite will also be present, as it takes both our blessings to fully seal the marriage. I'll bring the paperwork then and you can fill it out after the ceremony. The rings will stay with me until then. When do you plan on finalizing?"

Jason would have answered, but his tongue felt glued to the roof of his mouth. At the mention of Piper's mom his hands immediately clammed up. Why did she have to be there? Would she be angry with him? Would...would she tell Piper, or worse *bring* her?

Percy slipped his hand in his and said, "Tonight. Probably soon."

Hera nodded. "That should be fine, I have nothing else planned. Any chapel, courthouse, temple or other similar place will be fine, they all have my blessing as places of union. You will also require a legal marriage officiant to solidify the mortal side of the marriage and make sure all the worldly paperwork will be filed properly. Make sure you have one witness and one family member each present. For example, someone with the same godly parent as you will work as a family witness, but someone who is only your cousin on the Olympic side will not. Any mortal relation is fine. Did you get all of that, would you like to write it down?" In the background Leo took off from Frank's back and started flying at the rubber duck again, trying to grab it.

"Uh, no I think we're good." Percy said, watching Leo. "We'll get a hold of you when everything's ready."

The goddess looked skeptical but she nodded again and stepped back a few more feet. She took one last look around at all the animals and drove her staff into the floor. Everyone simultaneously poofed back into themselves. Unfortunately for the four people crowded together in the middle of the floor that meant they were all tangled together. Grover was at the bottom of the pile, finally awake. He bleated in alarm with Coach Hedge draped over his back. Will sat between his legs, Nico cradled in his arms similar to how Percy had been in Jason's when he'd turned back. Frank found himself standing in an open stall and luckily for Leo he'd turned right at the lowest point in his dive bomb so he only fell about two feet to the ground, landing with a surprised yelp.

As they all scrambled back to their feet, Hera glowed brightly and Jason closed his eyes as she disappeared. “What just happened!?” Frank said. “Where’s Hera?” He peeked around the door of the stall to look towards where she’d first appeared.

“Just left,” Percy told him, “and to answer your first question: you’re no longer a llama.”

Leo braced himself against the sink, a hand to his chest. “Oh my gods, I feel so strange. Were we all animals?”

Percy nodded. “Yeah.” He told each of them what they had been turned into. “Just be grateful that Jason was able to convince her to turn us back and not kill us.”

They all looked at him, and Hedge, accepting the baseball cap Grover was handing him, asked, “Did anything strange happen when we weren’t ourselves?”

Jason chewed on his bottom lip, trying his hardest to avoid Nico’s questioning look. He was thankful that he didn’t remember being tossed around like a hot potato. “Nope,” he said, sounding a little strained, “you all just sat there while Hera and I talked.” It was a lie, but one of those ones that he felt were for the best. He’d probably tell Percy what actually happened when they got a moment alone, but as for the rest, they would be happier not knowing. Percy gave him the side eye, but didn’t call him out.

Nico rolled his shoulders and stretched his arms above his head, leaning up on his tiptoes. “Ugh, I feel so cramped. I never want to be a rock again. Did you two dumbasses get what you came here for at least?”

Jason ignored the insult, after all it was their fault they'd been in this predicament. "Yeah, we're all good to go, just gotta find a place. Hey, Percy, why don't we go head out and do that? Let's give these guys a break from us for a bit." He honestly just wanted a break from *them*.

"Alright...sounds like a plan."

To their friends, Jason said, "Sorry we got you caught up in that mess."

Before anyone could answer, the Iris Message behind him started beeping and flashing, indicating that it was about to end. Percy shut the water off and the image began to fade. It sputtered and right as it disappeared completely something yellow shot out of it and landed at Leo's feet. He bent down and picked up the rubber ducky, looking at it in confusion.

"That's not possible," Hedge said, taking a step away from Leo as if he was holding a bomb rather than a plastic duck. "IM's don't transmit physical items."

"I don't think that was a regular IM, Coach. "Jason told him. "It shouldn't have lasted as long as it did either."

"We should leave that here," Will said uncomfortably.

Leo debated it for a second and then dropped it into his tool belt. "What? If she comes looking for it, I'll give it back!" He protested. "This ducky is from Olympus, it could be special."

Nico pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed. "Leo, it's just a

fucking plastic toy. Leave it h-”

The door creaked open to the bathroom and the same maintenance man as before poked his head in. He caught sight of Jason and nodded at him in greeting. “Alright, ten minutes is up, everybody out.”

Answers And Advice

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Meanwhile, Continued- *Argo II* Dining Room-

Leo's POV

It took four tries to get a hold of someone in the kitchen sink. The IM just kept going to T.V. static before spitting out the *drachma* they'd thrown in. On the fourth try, the IM went to static and then clarified but it wasn't Hera on the other side, it was some lady in what looked like a wholefoods store. She looked irritated.

"Have you no manners? The user you are trying to call is obviously not accepting messages at this time! Just because you keep throwing that coin in and-" She paused, blinking a few times before putting on a pair of cat-eye glasses and squinting at them. "Frank Zhang? Is that you?"

Leo nudged Frank with his elbow.

"Lady Iris! Hi, uh, how's it going? Long time no see." Frank said.

"You look different from the last time I saw you. You're taller and more...tattooed," She said, moving her finger around to indicate all of him. "Was that done with vegan ink?"

"Um...yes?" Frank looked sideways at the others but they just shrugged at him. Leo honestly didn't think to ask when he was getting

tattooed and he didn't think any of the others did either. He didn't even know that tattoo ink *could* be non-vegan.

"Well, I love it, it's very beautiful and the work is exquisite." She admired Frank's arm through the IM. "Anyways, why were you trying to call Queen Hera? She blocks all incoming messages unless they're business related. I didn't pick up any intentions to request a marriage union so I didn't push the calls through."

"Sorry, we didn't know that. We aren't trying to ask for a marriage, but it is...business?...related. It has to do with a wedding she officiated last night for two of our friends." Frank explained, silently taking on the role of negotiator for them.

Iris crossed her arms and pursed her lips, eyeing them one by one. "A wedding last night? You mean the Jackson-Grace one, right? Woo-who-who, that's the talk of Olympus right now. Those boys sure know how to stir the pot up there. Zeus and Poseidon haven't been this worked up since the beginning of the second Titan War. Hera's in the dog house for approving it, but Zeus can't really do anything about it because the bond didn't reject the boys when she formed it. It's a done deal assuming it's been consummated, that is. Oh, and by the looks on your faces I think it's safe to say it has."

"Yeah, er, that's the one we need to talk to her about. Pretty urgently actually, it's a time sensitive thing. Can you push our call through?" Frank shot a nervous glance over his shoulder through the doorway of the kitchen to check on Percy and Jason. Leo looked back with him, but the boys were still out.

"Mmmm...I wish I could, but Hera's restrictions are impossible to get around. If some of you want to get married, it'd be no problem but other than that I can't do it. The grooms from the wedding in question aren't here either, it would be inappropriate for me to allow it while that's the case. Hera takes her marriage bonds very seriously, she likes to deal with the first parties directly. She even places privacy charms

on the complimentary wedding albums she sends out." Iris explained, spreading her hands out to the sides helplessly.

"Yeah," Nico muttered, "we already discovered that." He rubbed his fingers together absently and Leo felt his own phantom sting from the burn he'd gotten.

Frank bit his lip, looking unsure of what to say. Grover patted him on the back and took over. "Lady Iris, this is really important. We figured out that Aphrodite might be responsible for this whole thing, and if we're right then it's cruel for us not to say anything and let our friends be stuck in a marriage they don't want. We want to get this fixed for them, but to do that we need to speak with Hera and explain things to her so she understands. Could you *please* let us do that?"

Iris listened to Grover's plea with growing confusion. "Aphrodite? What exactly do you mean, Lord of the Wild? Please elaborate." Leo sometimes forgot that Grover held a small amount of sway in the Olympic world on account of his title and duties. The satyr was so meek and quiet most of the time that it was easy to overlook him. It was only when matters of nature, and apparently a best friend's honor, came up that you really got to see him for who he was. It wasn't hard to see why Mr. D had appointed him Lord of the Wild and why Coach Hedge, who's normal go-to was to bonk heads first, ask questions never, and take orders from no one, respected him so highly. When he spoke, people listened.

Grover sighed marginally in relief and Frank shuffled out of the way so he could take center point. He spent a good few minutes explaining their theory about Aphrodite and Ares in the bar, and how before that Percy and Jason had shown no signs of interest in each other. Leo thought that was a bit of an overstatement. There's always been a strange closeness in their friendship that they didn't share with him and Grover, which, yeah he'll admit, was sometimes the cause of his jealousy. But now he wondered if maybe that closeness wasn't quite as platonic as he'd originally thought, because as he went over it in his head he started to pick little instances out that sent up red flags. For the record, Leo did not think Percy and Jason had been cheating on

their girlfriends with each other this whole time, but it's not unheard of for people to fall in love without them noticing it until it's too late.

Leo could touch an object and instantaneously be able to dismantle and put it back together exactly how he'd found it, he could build an enormous semi-aquatic bronze warship out of a faulty dragon he had fixed, but he couldn't look at his best friend and see between the lines? Tell if anything was bothering him? Jason Grace wasn't a complicated guy, he'd always worn his heart on his sleeve, but maybe, just maybe, Leo hadn't taken a look at it in a while. When he first met Jason the guy had been conflicted over who he really was, where he belonged, his whole identity had been stripped away. And he wasn't just talking about the memory loss brought about by Hera. Leo had watched him struggle to try and figure out who he was while also trying to find who he was *inside.* Perhaps, after all these years, he'd finally found the last piece of that puzzle...and maybe Percy Jackson had unknowingly been there along the way to help him out.

As Grover explained the night more and more, a small pit of doubt grew in Leo's stomach. Had...had they been wrong? *Was* there something, however faint, hanging between their friends that had gone overlooked until one crazy night in Vegas? Had Leo, so blinded by jealousy and the obligation to defend his two best friends, simply refused to see what was right under his nose? N-no, of course not. Leo was an engineer, he was basically the definition of a practical, critical thinker. He didn't let something stupid like hasty, in the moment emotions rule his decisions. But...he was also human, and humans, well, what did his dad always say about them? Humans were complicated, machines were simple.

He tuned Grover out while he slowly slipped into his own head to go over some of those instances he was worried he could've just been blind to. All the times Percy and Jason had slept in each other's dorms, each other's *beds,* or worn clothing that clearly belonged to the other. Leo had never crashed in Jason's bed, only ever on the couch and even then only a handful of times. When Piper came looking for Jason, Leo would always point her in the direction of Percy's dorm, knowing he'd be there. He thought about Jason bringing coffee to their early morning weekend get-togethers for Percy and Percy alone.

Leo didn't even like coffee so he never really bothered to ponder it, but he knew Piper did. To be fair, she usually brought her own, but still.

There was also that day Jason's pet fish's eggs started to hatch and he'd rushed down to the lecture hall he just conveniently knew Percy would be in. Jason had gone to the windows outside with Frank and asked him to turn into an aquatic animal to tell Percy the news through telepathy, because if he'd interrupted the class directly Percy would have gotten in trouble. That hadn't stopped Percy from leaving the class immediately to go sit by the fish tank with Jason all night while they hatched. Leo had been with Annabeth when they went looking for her boyfriend the next day only to find him slumped against Jason on the floor below the tank, both asleep. But that could totally be explained away. Percy was a marine bio major and the fish were...well fish, that was kinda his thing.

But...all the duo quests, all the sparring, the banter, the laughing, and the smiles, they flashed through Leo's brain one by one along with moments from last night. The soft, tender looks they'd shared anytime they could, how comfortable they appeared together. Leo could barely recall Percy or Jason drinking alcohol throughout the duration of the wedding itself. And...and the *slow dancing* after the ceremony...how they'd held each other in their arms like they were the only two people in the world. Oh gods. Leo had been *so* wrong about everything. Why did this knowledge only hit him *after* he'd suggested pissing off Hera again?

Why Jason had gone to Percy first in the scenario of the break-up theory finally became glaringly clear. Those two idiots *were* in love. They just didn't know it yet. When Will had first given his thoughts on what could've happened with the girls, Leo had been against it one hundred percent. He'd felt like his friendship was on the line if he really had been Jason's second choice to confess a break-up to. But with all this new information he was just now allowing himself to see, it made perfect sense. How many times had Jason whined to him about Percy and Annabeth's relationship? Certainly more than anyone on the sidelines should have, and from what Grover mentioned earlier, it seemed like Percy had much to say on Piper and Jason's too. Leo

really was blind when it came to his friends. He didn't see a potential rift forming between Piper and he definitely didn't see whatever had been growing with Percy.

He tried to calm himself down by forcing his brain to focus on the almost certainty of two gods being present at the time of the first declarations. He tried so hard to believe in his previous speech, but no matter what, he couldn't shake the feeling that Aphrodite had nothing to do with it. The pit that had been growing inside him dropped out and took his stomach with it. He braced himself against the sink and covered his mouth, his mind spinning with everything that was running through it.

He jumped when a hand landed on his shoulder and he looked over to see Grover's worried expression. "Hey, man, you okay?" It was such an echo of what Leo had done to Frank a few minutes ago that it forced a bark of laughter out of him. Grover looked startled and took a step away.

Leo dropped his hand and put it to his chest instead. "I think we've made a terrible mistake."

"Huh?" Frank said, "about what?"

"T-the...everything! The theories, they're all wrong! Gods, we're so *stupid.* How did we not *see* it? The girls...oh gods, the girls must have known, there's no way they couldn't. That's why they're not mad!" He threaded his hands through his curly hair, feeling the stubbly bald patch that was home to his tattoo. He turned towards the sink quickly to tell Iris never mind about it all. "Hey, don't worry about-...uh...guys, where's the IM?" The sink was empty, the water turned off.

Grover took his head in his hands and turned him back to face him.

“Leo, what are you babbling about? Iris couldn’t push our message through so she went to deliver it in person. She didn’t seem like she believed us, it was more like she thought we’re crazy and wanted Hera to prove us wrong. But that doesn’t matter, because we’ll get to talk to her soon and tell her everything.”

Leo grabbed onto Grover's forearms and looked him in the eye. “She thinks we’re wrong because we *are.* It’s not fake! Any of it!”

Grover shook him a little bit, “Dude, five minutes ago you were right there beside me, we were on the same page! What happened?”

“I thought about it. Actually took a step back and looked at the whole picture, instead of just focusing on last night.” Leo released his arms and poked Grover in the forehead with one finger. “ *Think about it* . Go back over the years and pick them apart, ignore the jealousy, Grover. Set everything else aside and look at it from a neutral point of view, okay?”

Grover swatted his hand away and crossed his arms over his chest. “This is *ridiculous* , we’ve been over this already. I’m not gonna-”

“They practically share a dorm room.”

“So what-”

“They share beds. Percy took Jason to his mom’s wedding.” Frank, Will, Nico, and Hedge had fallen silent again, watching them argue. Nico pointed the Cheez-It box towards Will who reached inside and grabbed a handful.

Grover scoffed, rolling his eyes. “ *I* went to Sally’s wedding. *I’ve* slept in the same bed as Percy. Does that mean *I’m* in love with him too?” He asked sarcastically.

“Does he sleep on your bare chest?” He shot back.

Grover reared back, confused. “What? No, that’d be weird, I have a *girlfriend,* and so does he.”

Leo made a helpless noise in the back of his throat and turned sideways so he could throw both his arms out in the direction of the dining room. “ *Then why do they do it?* ” When Grover didn’t have an immediate response to that, Leo added, “Look, I know like ten minutes ago I was ride or die for the Aphrodite theory, but I can admit when I’m wrong.”

“You changed your mind pretty quick after only ten minutes of thought.”

“That’s because I *wasn’t* thinking before that. Okay, well, what do you guys think?” Leo asked the others.

Hedge shook his head quickly. “No clue, too many untied loose ends for this goat to be sure.”

Nico nudged Will with his elbow. Will nudged him back. Nico nudged him harder and Will rubbed his side with a grimace and said, “We think it’s plausible.”

Leo turned to Frank, who shifted in place awkwardly, rubbing the back of his neck. “I don’t know. I think we should just talk to Hera

first, tell her what we think happened. She's a god and obviously an expert on stuff like this, I mean she's been doing these weddings for centuries, right? She's bound to have more information than we do. I still think it's not just an accident that my dad was there last night, but we don't actually have *proof* that he or any other god had anything to do with it."

"That's a very reasonable stance on this, Zhang." Hedge told him, nodding in approval. "Way to keep a level head."

Grover sighed. "So we talk to Hera, give her both sides of the theory. But Leo," he said, getting his attention, "what if you're wrong about *this.* You said you're willing to admit when you are. So what if you pitch this to the goddess and she believes you and they stay married, but it turns out you had misread everything? What happens if they get their memories back and it *was* all Aphrodite's fault and they find out we were *this,* " He held up his index finger and thumb so close together that you could just barely see a sliver of space between them, "close to helping them, but we ended up convincing Hera that it was real? You know she won't come back for another visit about this. What will you do then? Will you tell them it was you that suggested it to her?"

"I-" Leo couldn't let himself be swayed. He spared a glance back to the couple in question and thought about the first picture in the album after the cover photo. How sweet and soft they'd held each other as they kissed, Percy's enormous grin and Jason's tender smile when Axel's wolf-whistle had broken them apart. "I'm *not* wrong." He said firmly. "We don't have all the details about what happened before we left camp or what they did during the night when we weren't around, but I'm sure that-" He stopped as Festus' creaky voice filtered through the speakers, alerting him before the room lit up with a golden flash that was quickly heralded by a second one.

Leo's back was to the door that led into the dining room where the boys were out cold, which was where the flashes had come from. Frank, who was facing him, opened his eyes. He stared at Leo briefly before his eyes flicked past him. Frank's face drained of all color and

he looked like he'd much rather have left his eyes closed. One by one his other friends also paled as their attention focused behind Leo. It was eerie, like that scene in a horror movie where the main character asks if the monster is right behind them and it turns out it is. He felt a shiver run down his spine and turned. It was Hera all right, and surprisingly she didn't even look that angry. She stood directly behind Leo, just on the other side of the doorway and right next to her was-

"Hello, boys. I hear there's some...misunderstandings that need to be cleared up." Aphrodite said, tucking a lock of hair back up into her elaborate hairdo. "Let's get to it, shall we? I'm a very busy woman."

It took Hera snapping her fingers impatiently a few times before they all snapped out of it enough to robotically filter into the dining room to sit at the table. Hera and Aphrodite spared very interested glances at the two boys slumped over on the table before they sat down on the opposite side of the table from them. Leo and the others claimed their previous chairs with the exception of Nico and Will, whose seats had been taken by the two celestial beings in the room. They settled for standing behind him and Grover, which Leo was thankful for because the creepy crawlies that were still plaguing his spine disappeared when Nico's powerful, comforting presence appeared. Nothing could sneak up on him with Nico there.

His uneasiness from behind may have ceased but in the front it was rampaging full force. Unnervingly, it wasn't Hera who started talking once they'd sat down, it was the love goddess, perched delicately on the very edge of her chair.

"I'm under the impression that you have a story to tell us. You may begin." She said with an elegant sweep of her hand.

Leo kicked Grover's leg under the table and the satyr jumped in his seat. "Oh! Uh, right, well we just, we had some...some...concerns about-"

“Stop!” Aphrodite shouted. They flinched. She leaned forward and drummed her long acrylic nails on the table, eyeing each of them independently. Hera simply sat there, her expressionless face focused on Percy and Jason. “I already know the story,” She laughed, sounding like a million twinkling bells, “Iris played us the recording of the message. I am aware of what you think I have done to your friends, and I must say I’m very flattered by it. But I cannot take credit for something I didn’t do.” Her sickly sweet smile turned on Frank and Leo honestly had to give him props because they guy didn’t shrink back from it. “Frank Zhang. Mars’ favorite, his *blessed,* you’re so very like your father.” Well Leo thought that was kind of *rude* for her to say, but if it bothered Frank, he didn’t show it. “You sensed him last night, yes? In that bar? Well, his Ares form at least. You are correct, he was there, as was I. I don’t particularly think *middle aged male bartender* is the look for me, but it sufficed for the moment.”

“You were…the bartender that tried to kick us out?” Frank asked. When she nodded in confirmation, he continued. “What…but you just said you had nothing to do with it!”

“Hmm, did I? I don’t think you quite understand what I was saying. I never said I had *nothing* to do with it, I said I didn’t do what you and your friends are *accusing* me of! A *love spell?* ” She scoffed and leaned back, folding her arms gently over her chest. “What a preposterous notion, you really think I’d do something like that?” When no one jumped to reassure her she sniffed, indignant, and turned her nose up at them. “How rude. Let me clear something up for you all. From the very first moment I met Percy Jackson, I have taken a special interest in his life. I took one look at him and saw every potential loveline he could’ve developed.” Suddenly she shot forward in her chair, fuchsia flames flickering in the reflection of her eyes, her hands clenched on the edge of the table. Leo heard the wood groan alarmingly. He and the others instinctively flinched backwards. “ *Do you know how fucking hard it was not to shove it in Zeus’ face all these years that I saw one connected to his son?! Zeus* -”

“Aphrodite.” Hera snapped in warning, taking her eyes off the

unconscious boys just long enough to give her companion a stern look.

The love goddess took a deep breath and her anger seemed to dissipate. “My point is, love spells are for people who do not already possess the possibility of an organic connection. So to answer your question: I, nor anyone else, have used love magic on Jackson and Grace. I went to the bar last night because I sensed what was about to happen and wanted to see it play out for myself. I *did* try to help things along when I swapped their non-alcoholic drinks with your,” she gestured to him and Frank, “alcoholic ones after you set them down on the bar as you left for the bathroom. They smelt it before they drank them, of course, but to my surprise they decided to finish them anyway. I’m not sure what they spoke about before deciding to, but it was no accident that they did what they did last night.” She finished her story with a shrug and then added, “I don’t even know *why* I have to explain myself. The *audacity* of you children.” She grunted angrily, working herself up again, but with another warning look from Hera she settled down.

Leo…Leo was having a moment. His drink. His Aqua Vitae that they had poured into regular glasses because they weren’t allowed outside alcohol. His drink that he just now realized he’d never picked back up. Now that he was going over the bar interaction he definitely remembered noting his missing glass from the counter. In his defence, he and Frank had left the bathroom and then immediately had to deal with Percy and Jason’s public displays of affection and the subsequent high noon standoff that followed. *Think, Leo, think,* he told himself. When Frank and him had gotten up to head to the bathroom, they’d walked past the bar that Percy and Jason were sitting at. It’s not that he didn’t remember this until now because of the alcoholic induced memory loss, it’s just that it was such a small exchange that he didn’t think it was relevant. Now, he reflected on it.

Frank and him were walking side by side discussing something or the other when Frank suddenly stopped, pointing out the fact that they were taking their glasses to the bathroom with them. He held up one finger and tapped Jason on the shoulder, who jumped and looked back at them with a stupid smile fighting for control of his lips. Percy had picked up his Shirley Temple and sipped from the straw

nonchalantly.

Hey guys, can you watch these for us, please? Frank had said, setting his glass down next to Jason's. Leo followed suit. *We'll be back, just heading to the bathroom.*

Hmm? Yeah, sure, have fun, Jason had said distractedly before turning back to Percy.

Percy set his cup down and played with the straw, giving Jason his full attention again. As Leo and Frank walked away he heard Percy say, *So yeah, um,* he let out a little burst of nervous laughter, *yeah. You think we should? Because I-maybe I'd like to-,* and then they'd gotten too far away to hear the rest but Leo didn't pay it any mind. It wasn't suspicious...at the time. But now, knowing what he knew, hearing what Aphrodite said, and going off his thoughts right before the goddesses appeared, both the boys' behaviors and Percy's shy, reserved tone sent out another one of those red flags.

Well if anything, all of this new information just solidified his belief that they'd been in love with each other for a while without knowing it. Aphrodite already confirmed that the potential loveline was there. Leo just wished he'd thought everything over before pitching his stupid idea to contact Hera again because they pretty much already had all the evidence they'd needed to figure this out. Although it would have been harder to make some of the others believe it without the goddesses backing up the truth. So maybe it's a good thing Jealous Leo had suggested a meeting with Hera, because now Supportive Leo had more ground to stand on.

"So...so it really wasn't a trick?" Grover asked. "They actually like each other. But it-"

Hera sat up, unfolding her arms in favor of clasping her hands

together in her lap. Leo was glad she didn't have her staff with her. Supportive Leo did not want to be Toucan Leo again. "Here is what it comes down to. You demigods doubt my ability to do my job."

"Woah, wait a minute! We never said that!" Grover interjected.

Hera ignored him. "You think I have made a mistake, that I have somehow *failed* at the one thing I have been doing since the dawn of my reign as Queen. My husband thinks the same, even though he's had it straight from the source. I take my position very seriously, you know. These accusations are a slight to me and everything I stand for. To merely *suggest* that I have permitted the defilement of the sanctity a union of two souls represents is blasphemous. I won't allow you to continue spreading falsities."

"Hey lady, don't get the wrong idea here, the only person we told that to was Iris." Leo said.

As with Grover, Hera didn't respond to him. "Do you believe that I would not have noticed if their feelings weren't genuine? It's impossible for that to happen, the bond wouldn't have taken if that were the case. Observe." Hera unclasped her hands and put a finger on the table, then drew it back towards her. Leo nearly jumped through the roof when the two bodies next to him suddenly moved. Both Percy and Jason's left arms shot forward, stretching toward Hera across the table, palms up. She snapped her fingers and a holographic mirror image of their hands appeared a few inches above the real ones.

For a second nothing happened, and then a thin knife appeared as well, its point pricking into the center of the holographic hands, drawing blood. Another phantom hand swept over the other two and dropped a wedding ring into each palm. The image froze. "This ritual is not just for show. This is the forming of the bond, and these rings will test whether or not the intentions between two people are true and unclouded. It is fool proof. I admit that when these two heroes

requested a marriage I fully expected the rings to reject them, but I humored them and attempted it anyway. Perhaps I was feeling generous." Her eyes lingered on Percy's face a moment before turning back towards Leo and the others. "How pleasantly surprised I was when it showed something unexpected." She snapped her fingers again and the image unfroze, the blood slowly absorbing into the rings. The metal circles glowed with a soft golden aura before dimming back to normal. The third disembodied hand came back and plucked the rings up. The image froze again.

Hera reached over and lightly tapped on the real rings below the hologram. As her finger touched first Jason's, then Percy's, they started up the same soft glow and a thin string of light formed between their hands. "As you can see, the bond was approved." She said, swishing her finger through the floating image. After that she plucked at the string connecting their real wedding rings and it sang like a finely tuned harp, crisp and beautiful. "And down *here* you will see that whatever feelings they held towards each other last night are still *very* much present. So no mistakes made. Believe me, had they not loved each other and truly wished to be bound together I would have known it at once." For the last time Hera snapped her fingers and the hologram reset to when the rings were absorbing Percy and Jason's blood. Except this time, when the last of it was gone, the rings pulsed red and then started corroding over, turning first brown, then green, then finally black and grey as they disintegrated into ashes in their palms. Hera shooed the floating picture away and sat back in her chair.

Aphrodite smiled pleasantly. "Quite an ingenious bit of magic, don't you boys think so? Arranged marriages are so last century, no more pesky matches made simply for economic or personal gain. At least for Olympus approved marriages that is. It takes both of us to officiate and finalize the main event, just as it took both of our magic to form the rings. This results in a union that is born out of love and desire," she put a hand to her voluptuous chest, "and of a complimentary lifelong partnership," she finished, gesturing towards Hera.

Will slowly raised his hand. "I have just one question, if that's alright?" Hera nodded. "Okay, uh, so does all that mean they...well I

guess what I'm asking is if they're still dating Piper and Annabeth." Grover, who had been looking like he was going over a very long math problem in his head this whole time, seemed to tune back in. Leo wondered briefly if he had looked like that when he was going through his own revelation.

"As if I'd approve the marriage of my daughter's boyfriend to another man behind her back." Aphrodite said, shaking her head. Leo secretly thought that's *exactly* something Aphrodite might do, simply to cause trouble, but he wisely stayed silent. It felt...good knowing that Jason hadn't intentionally, or otherwise, hurt Piper by sleeping with someone else while they were still together. The sting of not being Jason's first choice to tell about the break-up was enormously lessened now that he knew it was just because he wanted to get inside of Jackson's pants.

"Absolutely not." Hera said. "No, the bands would have crumbled and the bond would have rejected them. All previous relationship ties had been severed by the time you called me last night." Will breathed a sigh of relief, looking a little smug about it. Leo didn't blame him, he deserved it. Grover seemed to finally accept what had actually happened, and he stared in confusion at Percy's sleeping face. Nico looked for all the world like someone had just given him permission to wreak havoc upon the two poor souls that were resting peacefully on the table. Leo remembered Nico expressing his support of the marriage if it wasn't for the cheating, but now that Hera had cleared that up there was nothing stopping him from 'supporting' them in the best way he could: through merciless teasing. Not that he hasn't already been doing that, but Leo didn't envy Percy and Jason what was to come.

Will clasped Frank, who also looked marginally cheerier if not slightly confused, on the shoulder and asked Hera, "So when did *that* happen? How did all this start?" Things were starting to look up.

"That's the issue. Something is wrong with the bond, or at least a small portion of it." She said. The mood in the room tangibly tanked. Hera reached over and poked Percy on the head a few times and then

did the same to Jason. “From the message Iris played us we know that these two have severe memory loss. That’s a problem, it should not have happened. And before you say it, no, it has nothing to do with the amnesia I brought about when I joined the camps.” She slid the wedding album over to her and Aphrodite’s side of the table and picked it up. “I do not *steal* memories in order to create the pictures in this book, I simply borrow and duplicate them. The Jackson-Grace’s should have recovered all of the borrowed memories the very second they received this album. As it stands, my memory replications would not have taken every moment of last night from them, they would have left small pockets of the events I didn’t catalog.” She ran her finger down the cover and it flashed red. She rolled her eyes, raising an eyebrow at him and Nico over the top of the book before opening it. It was propped up so they couldn’t view the pages but her and Aphrodite could. “To begin making this book I have to start filtering through their memories starting at a pivotal emotional point in the grooms’ lives. That’s not to say *every* memory from that point on will be in here; I simply need the emotional attachment between them to be at a vulnerable point in order for me to...piggyback off of their shared memory chain, for lack of a better word.” She paused to wave her hand in a bored gesture. “Magic is complicated and I’m not going to spend eons explaining it, so just believe me when I say the ‘why’ isn’t important here, it’s the ‘when’. And the ‘when’ for them is sometime before they boarded this boat back on the grounds of Camp Half-Blood.”

“The Demigod Farm.” Aphrodite giggled. Hera gave her an unimpressed look and she quieted down, busying herself by observing the pictures only they could see.

“So that’s why they don’t remember coming to Vegas?” Grover said, speaking up for the first time in a while. “Because you wormed your way backwards in their memories until you got to...what? An emotional occurrence? Do you-and you think that moment is when the girls and them separated?”

Hera shrugged. “Who can say? I didn’t pull any memories from that time, only used it to anchor the memory spell there while I went through the night of the wedding itself. However, that *is* the most

likely scenario. The problem then arises that they shouldn't have lost any of the events that occurred at Camp or the travel period to get here. Something is interfering with my magic. I…must admit that I'm not quite sure what and neither is Lady Aphrodite. It would have to be some other god's magic, especially one that deals with memories or matters of the mind." Hera flipped a couple pages in the book until she reached what looked like one of the last pages.

"Oh my!" Aphrodite said, faux-fanning her face with her hand, a sly smile creeping across her face as her eyes roamed the pages. "I knew they'd be compatible, but this-"

"Aphrodite, behave yourself. You are only trying to embarrass these demigods and it won't work, they can't even see what's on the page." Hera shot a glare at her before returning her clinical, studying gaze back to whatever pictures had elicited such a reaction from the love goddess. Leo had a pretty good guess as to what they showed. He made a mental note to warn Jason about that before they got to that page.

"Fine," Aphrodite grumbled.

At the far end of the table, Coach Hedge was bringing a cup up to his mouth to take a drink. He tipped the glass up and took a mouthful before calmly setting the glass back down. He went to swallow and then his eyes went wide, and he almost choked on his water. He coughed, Frank reaching over to pat him on the back which only resulted in the poor satyr almost toppling off his chair.

"Are you okay, Gleeson?" Grover asked once Hedge had regained the ability to breath.

" *Nope.* " Hedge croaked, putting a hand to his chest. "I've had a sudden realization that none of you are going to be happy about."

Hera regarded him with interest. “Do you know what’s interfering with my magic, satyr? If so, now would be the time to say something.”

Hedge sighed. “Yeah, I know what the problem is. Never would have happened if those two would have just *listened to me.* ” He grumbled under his breath as he forcefully unzipped his fanny pack and dug around inside, eventually coming up with a small cardboard square. He unfolded it and tossed the empty Aqua Vitae bottle holder onto the table where it slid all the way to the center, dragging Nico’s Cheez-It crumbs with it. “Read the warning on that box for me, would ya, Valdez?”

Leo had a very bad feeling about this. Grover suddenly looked like he wanted to go vacate those crackers he’d eaten earlier. Leo picked up the box and turned it over so he could see the warning label. Hera and Aphrodite stayed silent but he could tell by the temperature drop in the room that Coach Hedge was probably right about this.

He didn’t know why the coach had told *him* to read it, he had almost as bad a case of dyslexia as Percy did. It took him a bit of deciphering before he could comfortably read it out loud. He cleared his throat and said, “Surgeon General Warning: Aqua Vitae is a recreational substance that should not be consumed if the drinker is pregnant or nursi-”

“Not that part, Leo!” Hedge said, facepalming. “Skip a few lines.”

“Ah, sorry. Okay, um, okay...here, yeah.” He ran his finger down the lines to help him keep his place. “Aqua Vitae will strengthen impulses normally repressed by the drinker. This beverage *WILL* lower your inhibitions and cause you to become inebriated unexpectedly fast, use *EXTREME CAUTION* if this is your first time enjoying Aqua Vitae . This is an alcoholic substance mixed with an unrefined, early version of the Nectar of the Gods to enhance flavor. This drink should *NEVER*

be consumed with *ANY OTHER* alcoholic beverage, as memory gaps *WILL* be larger and take longer to recover. *DO NOT CONSUME* this drink if you have any lasting, new, or worsening head injuries or memory loss. This beverage is not regulated by the FDA and is distributed solely through Lord Dionysus/Lord Bacchus directly, and as such some side effects may occur that have not been tested for…" Leo looked up. There was more to it but he was pretty sure that was all he needed to read.

"Well," Grover said shakily. "They did pretty much everything that warning label says *not* to do."

Yeah, this doesn't-" The cardboard flew out of his hands over the table and into Hera's.

She sat the wedding album down and closed it. Her eyes flicked back and forth as she went over the warning, Aphrodite pressing close to read it over her shoulder. The goddesses shared a look once they were done.

Hera sat the box down and linked her fingers together on the table. She looked like she was thinking so Leo thought it best not to interrupt. Her lips moved a few times like she was talking to herself and Percy and Jason's wedding rings flashed golden once. Eventually she looked up to address them. "I can safely say that Dionysus' drink is most definitely what's blocking my magic from working properly." She unlinked her hands and stood up from her chair, walking around the table to lean over the boys. There she lifted one of their eyelids each and peered into their pupils. She straightened up. "Well, there is absolutely nothing I can do about this," she declared.

He and Grover cried out in disbelief simultaneously.

Hera rolled her eyes. "Oh please, don't be so dramatic, I didn't say

they were stuck like this forever. It is slowly wearing off, and the more familiar things they see that trigger memory recollection will speed the process. I give you this one warning however, and I hope you heed it more than the last one you came across." She gave a tired look at the sad, crumpled box on the table. "Make sure they trigger the recollections in chronological order. If you go by the wedding album, things should go quite smoothly. But make absolutely sure that they don't go looking for the memories that they lost before the drinking started. *Nothing* from before the bar, do you understand? These are dangerous magics that have intermingled when they never should have. Everything is unpredictable in this situation. If they try to relive any memory from the time they left camp to the time they started drinking, and they haven't gone through the book yet, I'm afraid it could do permanent lasting damage and they may lose whatever memories haven't been returned to them. *If* that occurs, then I'm afraid there's nothing that I could do to repair it."

Nico cleared his throat to get everyone's attention. "So does this mean...we can't tell them they aren't dating Piper and Annabeth? They have to just...slowly relive the whole night thinking they're a couple of cheating bastards who can't keep their hands off each other?"

"Yes, that is precisely what I mean, unfortunately. It's not the most pleasant outcome, but I will give you this piece of advice: they do harbor genuine feelings for each other, so do what you can to push them together. As they stop resisting the marriage bond, it should be easier for the memories to come back. Stay away from the topic of their previous relationships. If the girls try to contact them in any way, do your best to thwart them." Hera told them gravely, turning away. "Oh and one last thing. Don't mention anything else of what you know to them either. Don't let them know Lady Aphrodite and I were here, I'm not entirely sure how that will affect things. They must be completely oblivious as to what's actually happened. Make something up or just don't tell them anything and let them make their own conclusions," she said looking back at them. She went to leave but as she did her gaze zeroed in on something. Too late, he realized he'd left the rubber ducky on the table and at some point before the women had shown up, it had found its way under the table. Hera's nostrils flared and he thought he heard her murmur something that sounded like " *Sir Quacks?"* Her fingers twitched and the ducky

disappeared. Leo felt a small pinch of sadness in his heart. Sir Quacks had been with him through so much last night.

Aphrodite stood up and blew them each a kiss before joining her companion behind Percy and Jason. “Take good care of these two for me, okay boys? Our reputation is on the line here, but more than that…” She looked down at them and Leo actually believed he saw a hint of affection in her eyes. “They deserve a happy ending.”

And with that, the goddesses started to glow. Once they’d gone, Will and Nico took their seats back and everyone sat in relative silence as they simply absorbed everything.

“Well, *FUCK!* ” Frank shouted, slamming his open hand down on the table. Everyone jumped. Not because of the loud sound his hand made, but because Frank just cussed, which was almost as rare as Grover doing it. “This is-this is the- *really bad.* ” He said, sucking in a sharp breath and running a hand through his hair angrily.

“Did we just make this worse or better for them?” Grover whispered.

Will, ever the optimist, chimed in with, “Better, definitely better. We know what to help them avoid, even if we can’t tell them *why* they have to avoid it. We’re on the right track.”

Nico put his head in his hands. “We can’t go back to camp until this is fixed. If they see the girls before then…” He lifted his head and looked at Leo. “Leo you gotta find a way to stall this trip home. Can you do that?”

Leo scoffed. “Easily, just leave that part to me.”

Hedge picked up the box on the table and studied it. “Guess we can’t let them see this after all. Good thing you forgot to give them a bottle to look at this morning, Grover.” He folded it back up and started destroying the evidence. Once he’d swallowed the last of it, he said, “We’d better get rid of the bottles too. See to that once you get back to your room, Grover. Now, what do we do about-”

“ *SHHH!* They’re waking up.” Leo said hurriedly as Jason began to stir next to him. “Everybody act natural.”

Chapter End Notes

lots revealed in this one, but most importantly we say good-bye to the ducky

Subconscious Creations

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Back To The Present- *Argo II* Dining Room-

Jason's POV

His arm was thrown out across the table at an uncomfortable angle. Odd. It was definitely folded up under his head when he'd gone into the memory. Percy's arm was stretched out next to his in the same position. They must have unconsciously mimicked their memory selves while passed out.

Jason sat up, shaking the pins and needles from his arm, his head full of everything he'd just seen. Percy yawned as he pushed himself off the table, the flash of his teeth reminding Jason of when he was a little otter in his arms last night.

"Welcome back!" Leo said loudly. Both him and Percy jumped slightly, their friend's voice too loud and unexpected in the quiet they'd woken up to. "How'd it go, what'd you see?" The smile Leo wore was wide and toothy, but something was off about it. Almost like it didn't quite reach his eyes. His best friend swung an arm around Grover's shoulders and pulled him closer. Grover blinked once, like he'd just been jostled out of a trance, and then he was flashing them a strained smile as well. He looked constipated. Alarm bells went off in Jason's head.

"Uh, thanks? Are...you two alright? Did something happen while we were out?" He asked them.

“Alright? Yeah, totally, everything’s great!” Grover said, his laugh sounding strange. Forced. “So, um, about that memory! The, uh, bar all the way to the casino right? How wild was that! Had a lot of fun didn’t we? Lots of...of *together* time. I bet that was nice, right?”

Percy gave Jason a bewildered look but he could only shrug, just as clueless as he was. “Grover…” Percy said slowly, “ *did* something happen?”

On the other side of Grover, Frank laughed like that was the funniest thing he’d heard all day. “Psshhh, what? No, why would you think that? We were just, um, w-we were...Will! Hey buddy, go ahead, tell them what we were doing!”

Him and Percy turned to Will, who had two fingers to each temple like he was trying to erase a headache that had just started forming. “ *Oh for the love of-,* ” He muttered before exhaling forcefully and crossing his arms. “Don’t mind them, they’re being stupid. Nothing happened, they’re just anxious to hear how the memory went from your perspective.”

Nico’s hand twitched on the table and bumped something that moved a fraction of an inch, making a slight noise as it shifted on the wood. Nico froze, his eyes going wide as he looked down at...their wedding album. The book was laying on the table right in front of him as if someone reading it had set it down just moments before Percy and him had awoken.

Jason hadn’t explicitly told them they couldn’t look at it while they were out, but he thought maybe his reluctance to show it to them at all earlier would have been warning enough. Apparently not, though. With the way Grover, Frank, and Leo were acting, he had no doubt that they’d been looking at it too.

“Nico,” Percy said in a warning tone.

Nico slowly raised his head up. “Oh, n-no, no this isn’t-” he paused to gulp, “I-I know how this looks but it’s not like that. We didn’t...it was really hot!” He said, pointing down to the incriminating evidence.

Percy reached over and snatched it away. “ *What?* What did you *see?* ”

Surprisingly, it was Frank who rushed to his defense. “He doesn’t mean it like *that.* Calm down, Percy.”

“Calm down?” Jason asked. “What about anything we’ve said about this thing made you guys think it would have been okay for you to look at it without us?”

“We didn’t look at it!” Grover protested, ducking out from under Leo’s arm.

Percy pointed over to the spot in front of Nico on the table. “Then why was it-”

“Alright, knock it off!” Coach Hedge said, sliding off his chair and walking over to Percy. “It was my idea, alright? *I* told them to open the damn thing, so if you’re gonna be mad at anybody, be mad at me. But before you do that, let me show you what Nico meant.” Hedge took the album and laid it down on the table, slipping his fingers under the cover. Percy went to grab it back from him but before he could, the cover flashed red and Hedge flinched, yanking his hand away. “See? That’s as far as we got. No one but you two can open it, so cool your britches.”

Out of all of the people in this room, Jason would have figured the satyr to be the *last* one to suggest such a breach of privacy. “Coach, why would you do that?” Jason asked.

“Because we were trying to *help* you. You’re being stupid about this, the both of you.” Hedge stomped his hoof and pointed a finger at them sternly. “And you know what? Forget waiting until tomorrow. You’re going to stay here and look at the next page right now.” He demanded. Hedge should know by now that trying to use an authoritative tone with Percy only made him want to do the opposite of what you were telling him to do.

Percy looked at the coach in disbelief. “No,” he said simply, before getting up and walking out of the dining room. Hedge watched him go but didn’t try to stop him, in fact he appeared relieved that he’d gone. Like getting him to leave was what he’d been trying to do.

Jason felt the weight of everyone’s gazes turn on him. Well okay then. He could read a room and know when he wasn’t wanted. He stood from his chair and scooped up his wedding album but then thought better about it and dropped it back on the table. It’s not like anyone could open it without him and Percy, and if wasn’t with him he’d be less tempted to take a peek.

“I’m gonna go to my room for a bit.” Jason told them. “Leo, we should probably get moving. The sooner we make it to camp the better.” His stomach twisted uncomfortably at the thought of talking to Piper, but it had to be done.

Leo rested an elbow on the table and gave Jason a nonchalant salute with his other hand. “I’ll get right on that, captain. We’ll be home before you know it.” Jason nodded in thanks and left the room so the others could go back to whatever it was they were doing before Percy and him rudely interrupted them by waking up. Probably gossiping again.

He got all the way to the turn right before the residential hallway when a pair of rapid footsteps behind him made him turn around. He expected Leo, but was met with Nico instead.

“Jason, wait a minute.” Nico called after him.

“What’s up?” He asked him as he came to a stop. Jason waited patiently as Nico gathered up the longest part of his hair and tied it back out of his face.

When he was done he said, “We really didn’t look at-”

“I know, it’s fine, Nico.” Nico nodded and chewed on his bottom lip, looking like he had more to say. “Is that all?” Jason asked.

His nod turned into a shake of his head. “I mean, obviously we *tried-”*

Jason sighed. “I said it’s fine, alright? Drop it already.” He turned.

“Wait, that’s not it.” Nico said quickly. Jason faced him again. “I just wanted to say that...don’t be so hard on yourself. About, you know, all this stuff about what happened. It’s not the end of the world and stressing about it is just going to cause more problems for you.” Nico fidgeted, looking out of his element, and tugged on the hem of his shirt. “You probably don’t want to talk to Leo because of Piper and I know Percy’s your usual alternative but all things considered… If you ever need someone to, uh, talk to or just vent at...well you were there for me when I needed it, so.”

Jason was actually a little touched by Nico's offer. "I'll keep that in mind. Thanks, Nico," he told him earnestly.

When neither of them moved, Nico asked, "So... *do* you have something you want to talk about? You can just, uh, *come out* and say it."

Jason leaned back against the wall and let his head rest on the wood, staring up at the ceiling. Why didn't he just continue on to his room? Talking feelings with Nico di Angelo felt strange. Still, the thought of telling him at least a *little* bit about what was going on inside his head was appealing.

Jason heaved another sigh. "I don't know, Nico. It's...gods it's so confusing."

"That's okay. If you don't-"

"I had sex with Percy Jackson," Jason blurted out. When that admission left him, so too did the enormous weight that had been nesting in his chest. Saying it out loud to someone other than Percy felt good.

Nico's eyes widened and he muttered, "Okay, so we're just gonna jump right in then." He took a deep breath and said in a normal volume, "I, uh, already know that, but that's a good st-"

Jason closed his eyes. "Twice."

"Oh. Well I don't really need to know the *details* about what happened last nigh-"

“This morning,” he whispered.

“What?” Nico asked. Jason was glad he couldn’t see him.

“The second time wasn’t last night, it was this morning. I-In the shower.” Jason opened his eyes and chanced a look at Nico. He was staring at him silently but he looked almost...excited? Happy? It was probably just Nico trying to be supportive. “It wasn’t really... *sex* sex, I just keep calling it that in my head, it was more like, uh, well-” a nervous laugh bubbled out of him. “But that’s details so I won’t go into it.”

“Okay, *that’s* something I didn’t know ab-” .

Another short laugh escaped him. “I really liked it.” If he was irritated that Jason kept interrupting him, he didn’t show it. “I had sex with Percy twice and I *liked it.* You obviously know what we saw in the taxi. It was us, last night,” Jason pushed off the wall and crossed his arms tightly across his chest, “and it was great. Amazing. And I’m confused and don’t know how to feel about it, because it was the best sex I’ve ever had.” His words hung in the air between them in the silence that followed. He was glad they were far enough away from the dining room that the others had no hope of hearing him.

Jason expected Nico to be surprised, but all he said was, “Please don’t tell *him* that. Percy already has enough of an insufferable ego without you inflating it more.” Nico rolled his eyes exaggeratedly. “So anyway, what are you going to do about it?”

Jason was at a loss for words. “Wha-I...nothing. There’s nothing *to* do about it.”

Nico raised an eyebrow at him. “There’s *always* something you can do. You can talk to Percy. I was just joking about not telling him, you know. You should most definitely do that. As soon as possible, in fact. Maybe even right now.”

He grit his teeth against a sudden wave of frustration. “I’ve *tried.* We *tried* to talk earlier and it just turned into an argument. We decided to go through a few more pages of the book before we try again.”

Nico nodded amicably. “Alright, that’s a good start. It’s better than *not* talking at least.”

Jason felt exhaustion follow the frustration. He just wanted to go sit in his quiet room and think about absolutely nothing for about four hours. That sounded nice. “Yeah. Thanks for listening, Nico. I think I’m gonna go lay down and try to get some rest. Uh, maybe don’t mention what I said to the others.” Nico opened his mouth to say something. Jason rolled his eyes. “No, Will doesn’t count. You can tell him.”

“You got it,” he promised, “see you later.” Nico turned and took off as quickly as he’d come.

Jason watched him disappear and then he turned the corner. Near the end of the hallway Percy’s door clicked shut the rest of the way. Great. How much he’d heard, if anything, Jason didn’t know.

He made his way down to his own door, where he paused and spared a glance at Percy’s next to it. It didn’t move. He turned the knob and stepped into his room, pulling the door closed behind him. It was exactly how he’d left it; his unpacked suitcase stood next to his bed, the garder wrapped pineapple sitting on top of it. His desk was strewn with half-finished drawings and diagrams, one of which being a blueprint to an over-the-summer architectural design project

Annabeth had asked him to work on with her. He quickly flipped it over so he didn't have to see her handwriting.

Jason thought about sitting down to work on some of the other drawings, but in the end he just emptied the contents of his jeans' pockets into his nightstand drawer and changed into a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt that hadn't spent the night in a Vegas hotel. He flopped down on top of the covers of his bed to stare up at the ceiling and forced his mind to go blank. It actually worked for a little bit. He even thought he might have been able to doze off for about twenty minutes, despite the numerous times he's been unconscious today.

Unfortunately his peace didn't last long. Thoughts of the latest memory pushed themselves back in and he eventually stopped trying to fight them off and just let them come. The down side was that most of those thoughts revolved around Percy.

The mischievous spark in his eyes as he stole piles of casino chips from overconfident dusty old men. His delighted little giggle as Jason leaned down and kissed his face after his last win. The happy, childish grin that had stolen his lips when Jason had shown him his 'magic' trick. Percy's earnest little otter eyes staring up at him from the cradle of his arms when he'd offered poor Nico to him. These times and more ran rampant through his head. Along with them came snippets from earlier memories: the shared taste of alcohol as they kissed in Rodrigo's bar, the excited but shy lilt of Percy's voice when he'd been talking about his degree, both of them laughing and bumping into each other in the hotel hallway on the way to their new room.

Their new room. Jason should steer clear of the memories they'd made there, nothing good would come of examining them again. At least, that's what he told himself. But when did he ever listen to his own advice?

"Fuck it, why not?" He muttered, linking his fingers together and

resting them on his stomach.

Jason glossed over the very start of the memory and focused on the moment when he'd lifted Percy off the table and laid him down on the bed. The sight of him nestled into the fluffy comforter, his half-naked body glowing in the colorful city lights that made their way in through the window, gave him pause. At the time Jason hadn't had very long to admire the view, just a brief glimpse before he'd gotten distracted with other things, but laying here in his room he had all the time in the world to linger.

The artistic portion of his brain ached to make him pick up any sort of drawing utensil and immortalize what he saw, but he knew that nothing he put on paper would hold a candle to the real thing. It wasn't even the context of the moment that made it significant. He didn't single this spot out just because it was the immediate prelude to sex. No, it definitely wasn't that. Smiling radiantly up at him, tan skin dancing with the colored lights, green sparkles twinkling in his hair, Percy looked peaceful and carefree. In that instant he was just a guy on the night of his wedding, about to enjoy a playful romp in the sheets. He wasn't thinking about the next quest or what essay was coming up or who could've died that year. There was no urgency to be somewhere else or *someone* else.

Behind those eyes, Jason saw only genuine happiness. Well...okay that's not the *only* thing. There was a healthy amount of excitement, definitely a large helping of desire, and even a small tic of nervousness, but considering the setting all of that was to be expected.

It did something funny to his chest, seeing Percy like that, as he kept the image at the forefront of his mind. The feeling was alarming, disconcerting. *Move on from that part,* he told himself. This time he heeded the advice.

He slowly let the memory go forwards, remembering every breathless noise Percy made as Jason kissed his way down his body. Fingertips

sliding across warm skin as he inched his pants down his thighs, only to get distracted by sculpted hip bones begging for attention.

Figure your shit out, Jason, he said in his head, *keep it together.* He let out a slow breath and continued.

Percy's urgent hands removing Jason's underwear, his petal-soft lips grazing the head of his dick. *Gods* , how badly he'd wanted to push into his mouth, but waiting had been so worth it. Jason followed the memory all the way up to the part where he'd eased Percy onto his stomach, running his hands up the backs of his thighs and over the smooth curve of his ass. His fingers hooked around Percy's hips, still slightly damp from Jason's saliva, and gently pulled them upwards so it would be easier for him to-

Jason's thought process screeched to a halt as his dick twitched against his leg, making him realize that it had been much more than interested in what he was thinking about. He looked down at the very obvious thickening length under the material of his sweats.

"I didn't ask *your* opinion," he muttered under his breath. His dick clearly didn't give a fuck, it just continued to fill out. He fisted his hands at his sides, ignoring the urge to slip one into his underwear and take care of the problem. When the bulge started to lift and tent he said, "Nope. Not happening."

He was getting hard from the thought *alone* of what he'd done with his friend, and if he allowed himself to get off right now...well it just didn't feel right. It'd probably make him feel even worse afterwards, when the high faded. Just another thing to add to the growing list of confessions he'd have to make to Piper.

Piper. That awful twist of shame writhed in his stomach again. *Don't think about her.* His previously excited dick did not enjoy the new

tracks his thought train had turned down.

Wait. *Okay, yeah. Think about Piper, it's helping the situation.*

Jason clenched his teeth and brought up an image of his girlfriend, bracing against the negative feelings that trailed along after her. He imagined her hand inching up his thigh to undo the button on his pants and slide his zipper down. She looked up at him from under her lashes, warm breasts pressing against his legs, as she dipped her fingers under the waistband of his underwear. The imaginary Piper pulled out his soft dick and started stroking it with gentle feminine hands. She parted her lips and leaned down.

Jason lifted his head a few inches off the pillow to check on the issue. The tent had deflated and his cock was slowly softening. He breathed a sigh of relief and let his head drop back down.

Wait.

Wait.

A tornado of guilt and confusion tore through him. He laughed incredulously and covered his mouth with his hand in horror. He'd used the thought of his *girlfriend* about to give him a *blowjob* as a way to *kill his boner.* Scrambling into a half sitting position, he glared down at his lap.

"What the *fuck* is your problem?" He demanded at his now almost completely flaccid dick. It twitched pitifully as if to say, *I don't know, man! I just do what the hormones want, okay!* "What the fuck is my problem?" He whispered to himself in the fading light of his room.

The floor was cold on his feet as he swung his legs off the bed and sat up all the way. Jason looked around for something to help calm him down. His gaze landed on his desk and the papers scattered across it. Drawing always helped him escape when he didn't want to think about the rest of the world. He should have just gone there first instead of laying down.

He padded over and sat in his desk chair, shuffling through the drawings and sketches. Nothing jumped out at him and he avoided even looking at the blueprint, so he opened a drawer and took out his favorite sketchbook. Flipping to a blank page after finding a stray pencil under the loose papers, he paused. What to draw? Normally he would just doodle aimlessly until something came to mind, but now he didn't even know what to start with. A lingering tendril of shame twinged inside him and it reminded him of Piper.

Piper had great features, she was lovely to look at and a perfect art model. He'd drawn her countless times over the years, so why not now? It might make him feel better.

Some of the tension easing, Jason put the pencil to the paper and got to work, lightly creating the shape of her face and then darkening the lines when he was satisfied with the angles and curves. The tip of the graphite rasped across the page as her slightly smirking lips and cute nose bloomed to life in its wake, every dip and slope as familiar to him as breathing. He got started on her hair next, keeping it short like she preferred. Well, best make it a *little* shorter. Yeah, it looked better like that, curling around his ears, framing his face. The crinkle at the corner of his left eye caused by the upturned smirk really tied it all together. Some shading here and there, a few barely-visible lines penciled in around his hair, and the quick portrait was pretty much done.

Jason released a content sigh and sat back to look at the finished work. Percy's handsome, devilish face stared up at him, his expression smug and knowing. He froze, going over in his head when exactly Piper had turned into Percy. He thought back to when he'd gone in and re-angled the jawline, added a small curve to the tip of the nose

instead of Piper's more straight, tapered off one.

His hand came down hard on the page and his fingers almost clenched and tore the picture from the book, but at the last second his professor's words floated through his head. *Never throw away your art. Even if you hate it, even if you think it's garbage or you see something off about it that you just can't fix. Whatever you put on that page, your heart wanted it there. Otherwise you wouldn't have picked up that pen in the first place. To throw away your creation, flawed though you believe it to be, is to throw away the piece of yourself that created it. Why destroy that? Maybe you don't like it, but I guarantee someone will. And if you can't find someone who does, well, show it to me. I'll love it for you. Did you know Van Gogh was never happy with his paintings? Hmm? He thought he'd never be good enough to amount to anything, but look at his works now! How different do you think his life would have been if-*

Jason forced his hand away, angry. He didn't think this portrait was bad, it was actually very nice for something done so quickly, but he hated it nonetheless. Percy's stupid smirking face mocked him, like it knew it wasn't supposed to be there. Like it knew he didn't have the heart to shred it up into little pieces and toss it out the window. He slammed the book shut on it and the loud *smack* that resulted made him feel marginally better. Taking a deep breath, he opened it to a blank page and tried again to draw Piper.

He wasn't successful. Every attempt either turned into Percy or was left unfinished right before it had a chance to do so. He gave up and stared helplessly down at the page filled with little half drawn portraits. Maybe he should just stop now, go out to the dining room and find something to eat for dinner.

No, he knew he wouldn't be able to leave. The mood to create had gripped him too tightly. He couldn't escape its clutches. Resigning himself to his fate, Jason yet again went to a fresh page, but this time he gave in to the urge to draw Percy. It was just going to happen anyway, might as well start with it instead of getting frustrated later. The question was, *how* should he sketch him? He already had a little over half a dozen portraits and side profiles of him, so that wasn't a

tempting option.

Maybe...maybe that moment from the hotel? Jason entertained the idea for all of about five seconds before discarding it. Even if he *ever* attempted to immortalize that, he certainly wouldn't do it with simple graphite. Acrylics, possibly. Oil paints would be best though.

Okay so, not *that* moment but maybe a different time that night?

Night?

Or morning.

He let out a shaky exhale, his mind once again taking a one way trip to dirty thought central. It was a good angle to draw Percy from. Not only that but the way the water had clung to his naked body as if it was magnetized to him would make for an interesting challenge to replicate. It wouldn't be the first time Jason had drawn nude pictures, but it *would* be the first time drawing this specific, unaware nude model.

He chewed his lip while he debated it, hoping something else popped into his head. No dice. He felt compelled to put that particular moment on paper. However he knew he couldn't commit to doing it fully naked. That would be wrong on so many levels, would be a huge breach of privacy and trust, so Jason stuck to a strictly above-the-waist rendition.

It wasn't hard to get started, his pencil flying over the paper as Percy's head, chest, arms, and stomach took form. Every now and then Jason would close his eyes and picture the specific scene he was drawing. From the position on his knees in the shower that morning, Percy had towered over him, his body on full display. The heavy weight of his

cock sliding in and out of his mouth, occasionally bumping the back of his throat burned itself into his memory, right along with the choked, desperate sounds that had fallen from Percy's lips.

He shook his head and focused on the other details. The water caressing miles of flushed tan skin, his heavy lidded gaze as he watched Jason enthusiastically swallow him down, moaning around him.

He spent a lot of time making sure he was satisfied with the finished work, feeling the incessant bug that had compelled him to do this become appeased and peaceful as he eyed his creation. Anyone who took so much as a glance at this would know in an instant what had been happening in that moment. It didn't show anything below the waist, the bottom portion just ending abruptly, but that didn't matter. By the debauched, blissed-out set of Percy's features, the way the muscles under his skin were tensed, Jason's own hand pressing into the flesh of one hip, pinning him to the tiles, even a virgin would be able to tell that this man was on the receiving end of a blowjob.

Jason cleared his throat, trying to dispel the dryness in it that had suddenly crept up on him. He shifted in his chair, acutely aware of his body's reaction to seeing this drawing. Fuck. Why did he do this to himself? He could never let anyone see this fucking drawing. He'd never live it down.

Why did he even do that anyway? He'd never sucked a dick before. It had sure been an enticing thought in the moment, and he had to admit…he'd enjoyed it. Why? He didn't know. 'Why' was the million dollar question to everything that happened in the last twenty four hours. Why did he get drunk last night? Why did he and Percy get married? Why was Thalia there? Why did he fuck Percy as eagerly as he had? Why did he give him a blowjob? Why, why, why. All questions, no fucking answers.

He dropped the pencil, leaving his sketchbook open to the shower

scene drawing, and surged to his feet. He could leave his room. A glance at the clock by his bed proved that venture hopeless. He hadn't realized how much time had passed since he came in here. It was already after eight. Hedge's bedtime, which meant everyone else's too if they didn't want to get a serious scolding.

Jason paced around his room, opening his window to let some air in before sitting on the edge of his bed. He noticed that at some point while he was drawing, Leo had started Festus back on the course for home. They moved through the night sky and Jason watched the stars slowly pass by out the open window. He wasn't that hungry so he didn't bother with trying to sneak down the hallway to get dinner. He didn't eat much that day, but for now it wasn't a pressing issue.

Sleep called to him. He wasn't tired but the thought of *not* thinking was very nice indeed, and sleep offered that reprieve. He flipped the corner of his blanket down and was just about to stand up to climb under it when a faint, almost silent footstep sounded right outside his room. A soft knock tapped once on his door before the handle turned and it opened a fraction.

Someone slipped inside, closing the door behind them. The lock clicked. Percy leaned back against the wall for a second, looking unsure and awkward. Jason was quiet as Percy strode across the room and claimed his desk chair, turning it around so he could face him. Neither of them spoke at first, they just stared at each other in the dim moonlight.

There was a tug at the back of mind, like he'd forgotten something important but couldn't quite remember what exactly. Percy drummed his fingers on his thigh and Jason tracked the movement. In the background, just behind Percy's elbow, his sketchbook lay on the table, open to the last drawing he had done. His whole focus zeroed in on it. Oh fuck. That's what he'd forgotten.

If Percy turned and saw that...

“So,” Percy started, fiddling with the loose material of his pajama bottoms, “I was thinking maybe we should have that talk now.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh, Percy, baby, what is you doin' in his room after bedtime?

A Dividing Wedge

Chapter Notes

Whooo thankfully the boys get to have their talk.....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time-Jason's Bedroom-

Jason's POV

"You want to talk about this...now?" Jason asked, trying and failing to keep his eyes from straying to his desktop. Luckily Percy was staring at the wall behind Jason's head so he didn't notice the path his gaze kept taking.

"What, so suddenly you *don't* want to talk about it? You're the one that brought it up this morning!" He said a little too loudly. Thank the gods that Percy's empty room sat between his and Leo's, and that the girls half of the hallway was empty.

"No, I do, it's just that *you* said you wanted to go through the book first," Jason reminded him.

"And we did. Well, one page at least...but, Jason," Percy finally looked at him and Jason tore his eyes away from his desk. "After what we saw in the casino, I think we should probably talk about this now."

Jason had a pretty good idea about what part of the memory Percy was referring to, but instead he said, "You mean the eighty year old lady who flipped you off and called you the devil incarnate?"

His answer caught Percy off guard and he snorted, smiling a bit. Jason thought he looked better this way, his face softer, amused instead of stressed. Some of the tension eased. “ *No.* Although that was pretty great.” Percy laughed again and turned his head to look out the window at the stars. “I meant being in the casino in general. I didn’t drink at all while we were at the poker tables. I wasn’t drunk for a long time and we…”

Jason sighed, flipping the corner of his blanket back up. He had a feeling he wasn’t going to get much sleep any time soon. “We kissed a lot.” He finished for him. “Yeah, I noticed that too. We’ll add it to the growing list of things we need to talk about. I’ll pencil in ‘kissing while mostly sober’ right under ‘getting married’, ‘having sex’, and…’whatever happened in the shower’...”

Percy had turned back to him by the time he was done talking and a slim moonbeam streamed in through the open window to splash along half of his face. He met his eyes, face set in determination. “Quite a list we’ve got. Let’s start with the ‘having sex’ part.”

Ah, and suddenly Jason knew what this was about. The build up had just been Percy getting enough courage to say what he really came here to say.

Jason cleared his throat, his gaze wandering to the desk again. “Technically the ‘kissing while sober’ part comes before that,” he said quietly.

“True. But I think you want to talk about sex first. Am I right?”

He nodded. “Yeah, yeah you are. How much did you hear?”

Percy shrugged. “Pretty much all of it. The ‘best’, huh?” Jason couldn’t

meet his eyes, but he could feel him watching. “Well, I’m flattered, really, but you did most of the work.” He felt his face heating up while Percy continued talking. “Don't...stress out over that too much, okay? Sex is sex, it’s kinda natural to like it.”

Is it?, he asked himself sarcastically.

He didn’t realize he’d spoken out loud until Percy’s eyebrows pulled together in confusion. “Uh, yeah, it is. Listen, we can’t really *change* what happened, so we- *what* do you keep *looking* at?”

The question jostled him out of his trance. “Nothing!” He said quickly.

Percy’s eyebrows went up and his head started to turn in the direction of the desk. Thankfully the rooms on the *Argo II* were small and his table was only two quick steps away from his bed. His hand covered the drawing about a nanosecond before Percy turned enough to see it. Unfortunately, because the rooms were small, that meant he had to crowd Percy against the back of his chair in order to reach the sketchbook.

Percy leaned back, alarmed at his sudden movement, putting a hand out in front of him as a reflex. It ended up pressed against Jason’s chest. He hoped he couldn’t feel how fast his heart was beating, but from the way Percy quickly pulled his hand away he was pretty sure he had.

“Jason, what the fuck are you doing?”

Jason looked down at him, very conscious of how close they were. “Um, I-”

Percy followed the line of his arm down to where it ended with his fingers splayed over the page in his sketchbook. Between the juncture of two fingers he could just make out the bottom of Percy's tattoo. He hastily moved his fingers together to hide it.

"Were you drawing before I came in here?" Percy asked him quietly. Jason didn't answer, it was pretty obvious that he had been. "Can I see it?"

"You don't want to see this one," he told him.

"I always want to see your art," Percy shot back.

"Yeah, well this ones different. Just trust me," he argued, praying he'd drop it.

No luck. Percy snorted in amusement before saying, "Drawing nudes again, Grace? C'mon, you've shown me those before too. Oh...wait, unless it's a nude Piper. Then, you know, I'm *totally* fine with not seeing it."

Jason's mouth was open and words were spilling out before he could stop it. "It's *not* Piper," he said firmly, voice tinged with the slight irritation he'd felt earlier from *trying* to draw her. *Stupid, stupid, stupid. You should have just lied and said it was,* he cursed himself mentally.

Percy grinned. "So it is a nude, then."

"I never said that."

“You didn’t deny it either.” A warm hand wrapped around his wrist and pulled back gently. Jason closed his eyes and let him slide his hand off the page.

The sound of a sharp inhale was the only noise Percy made at first, then it was quiet for a minute. Jason kept his eyes closed. Percy’s hand was still holding his wrist.

“It’s…,” Percy said at last, “it’s, uh, very well done. Um, it-"

Jason wanted to sink through the floorboards, never to be seen again.

“I’m sorry,” Jason whispered. “I didn’t...I just…” He didn’t what? He didn’t have an excuse for it, that’s for sure.

“Jason, look at me.” Well, he owed him that, at least. Percy’s gaze was cautious, curious. “Why did you draw this?”

Jason swallowed around the lump in his throat. “I just couldn’t get it out of my head, so I...got it out on paper instead. I guess. If that makes sense? I didn’t draw anything explicit- *I’m sorry* ,” he apologized again.

Percy looked back down at the drawing, his fingers twitching around Jason’s wrist. Slowly, he stood up from the chair. Jason tried to step back for him, but he held his wrist so firmly he couldn’t. Face to face, he could see that Percy’s eyes didn’t contain the small gold flecks that most green eyed people did, his were pure green, illuminated by the moonlight.

Percy’s free hand came up, resting against his chest again, and Jason

went still. They both watched it slide down his front until it reached the waistband of his sweats. His other hand let go of his wrist and joined the one at his pants. Long fingers dipped inside.

Jason grabbed both of his hands quickly. “What are you doing?” He asked in a voice slightly higher than normal.

“‘Oh, you know, just baking a cake.’”

Percy’s answer startled a laugh out of him. “I’m being serious. What-”

“Returning the favor,” Percy’s unsteady voice cut in, his head giving a slight nod in the direction of the desk.

“Whoa, hold on a minute,” he laughed nervously, trying to step back again. Percy came with him, face set in determination. “Percy, you *don’t* have to do that, I didn’t-I don’t expect you to. It wasn’t a f-”

Percy pushed him back a little bit. His legs hit the edge of his bed, and he sat down. Percy towered over him for the briefest of seconds before sinking to his knees, hands resting on Jason’s thighs. “I know, I want to,” he said simply, staring up at him, waiting for a response. When none came, Percy swallowed hard and ran his hands up his thighs slowly. “Then tell me...tell me you want me to stop.”

He opened his mouth to tell him that but nothing came out and he realized with startling clarity that he *didn’t* want him to stop. He closed his mouth.

Warm fingers found themselves under his waistband again, where they paused. “Tell me to leave right now, and I’ll go,” he whispered,

giving him another chance to stop this, to talk some sense into both of them. *Fucking say something!* He kept his mouth shut, ignoring his inner turmoil. Percy laughed, short and incredulously. “Tell me this is a bad idea?”

Jason’s whispered answer was immediate, automatic. “This is a bad idea.”

“So tell me you want me to leave, then.”

Shut the fuck up, Jason, don’t you dare- “I want you to stay,” he breathed.

The air around them was charged as he spread his legs so Percy could get closer. “Lean back,” Percy said. He did, using his elbows to prop himself up.

Percy was almost in the exact same position as the Piper he had imagined earlier, except instead of soft breasts squishing against his legs, it was Percy’s hard chest. When he pulled the waistband of Jason’s sweats down and tucked it under his balls, Jason was already hard. When did *that* happen? He couldn’t remember.

Firm, strong fingers wrapped around the base of his dick, holding him steady as Percy locked eyes with him and leaned down, parting his lips as he went.

Oh.

Oh.

His breath left him in a huff, all at once, when the head of his cock was enveloped in the wet, silky, *heat* of Percy's mouth. The next time he inhaled it was ragged and hitched in his chest as Percy started working himself further down, bobbing his head as he went.

"F- *Fuck* ," he groaned, feeling Percy's tongue move on him, smearing saliva to make the glide easier. When he had fit as much as he could in, Percy looked up again, all wide eyed, his lips resting against the fingers that were still wrapped around his cock. Jason was sure that if he had been standing up right now his knees would've buckled. Someone in the middle of doing what Percy was shouldn't have any right to look that innocent.

"Hhnnm?" Percy asked, his mouth flexing around him, the vibrations shooting straight through him.

Jason laughed breathlessly, thighs shaking, one of his hands flying up to weave through thick black hair, the other clenching in the sheets. " *Gods,* Percy, please just-"

A floorboard creaked right outside his room and they both froze, focusing on the door. A second passed during which nothing happened and Jason slowly released the breath he'd been holding. A knock so soft he could barely hear it rapped on the door. He tensed back up and Percy swallowed around him, probably a nervous reaction. Jason held in the whimper that tried to escape him. He didn't answer, hoping that whoever it was would think he was asleep and leave.

"Jason?" Leo's quiet voice called out.

He spared a glance down at his lap, where Percy was still sunk down on his cock, cautiously watching the door out of the corner of his eye.

“ *Shit,* ” Jason whispered. Percy looked up at him, like he was saying *well fucking do something!*

He cleared his throat, hoping he sounded relatively normal when he said, “Yeah, what’s up?” just loud enough to be heard from the hallway.

“Hey, man, you didn’t come out for dinner, you want me to bring you something?”

Curse Leo and his good intentions. “No, uh, that-that’s okay, I’m not hungry. I think I’m just gonna, um, go to bed.” He watched Percy’s eyes flick back over to the door and then down, to the handle that he’d locked when he came in earlier. He got a very bad feeling.

Percy started to slowly lift his head up, tongue sliding along the underneath of his dick as he went. He wasn’t *really* going to-

“ *H-ohhh,* ” Jason choked out, his body curling inward towards the sudden stimulation from the head bobbing in his lap. His fingers tightened in Percy’s hair involuntarily, but Percy just fluttered his eyes shut and picked up speed.

“-you okay?” Leo’s voice filtered back into his thoughts. Another soft knock. “Jason?”

“I’m fine!” He called. “Goodnight, Leo! See you-” Percy went down a little too hard and he felt his cock bump the back of his throat. Percy choked, gagging a bit, and Jason coughed to cover up the sound. His toes curled on the floor, a warm tendril of pleasure snaking through him from the way Percy's mouth moved on him.

“Uh, are you sure you’re okay?” Leo asked. “You’re not...hurt are you?” Percy's laughter, muffled around his dick, was almost silent, but the obscene slurping noise that resulted from him trying to breathe at the same time cut through the room. Percy blushed all the way to the roots of his hair, and Jason felt his own face heat up. “Dude, are you...crying?” Leo asked, sounding very concerned.

This time Percy had to pull off his cock and bury his face into his thigh, his shoulders shaking with silent laughter. What his mouth had ceased doing, his hand picked up, stroking him with short, even flicks of his wrist. Jason glared down at him, but he didn't have the willpower to push him away. If anything, his legs spread wider.

Percy lifted his head and smirked up at him through his lashes with a mischievous glint in his eyes, his lips still slick with saliva. He brought his other hand up and pressed a finger to them in the general *shhh* sign, his wedding band shining in the light from the moon.

It caught up with him that it had been too long since he’d replied and Leo was probably getting worried. “Nope! Just, um, d-drinking water?” Percy covered his mouth to stifle more laughter. Jason mouthed *shut the fuck up* at him.

“Uh, al...right then. Goodnight? I’m gonna see if Percy needs anything, do you want me to-”

“No!” Jason shouted quickly. Percy’s hand paused on him finally and he shot a worried glance at the door. “No, d-don’t bother him. I checked on him earlier, he’s asleep. Don’t wake him up. Please.”

A muffled, “Hey, Grover, never mind. Jason says he’s asleep," came from the hallway.

“Already?” Grover whispered doubtfully. “He never goes to bed before eleven.” Percy’s worried look turned on him and they both held their breaths. “Weird, but I guess it has been kind of a long day.”

Percy exhaled in relief and his hand started moving again, his lips twisting up into another smirk, the fingers of his free hand digging into the muscles of Jason's thigh. Jason let go of his hair and covered his own mouth, trying to breathe evenly through his nose.

“You still need help with that thing you mentioned earlier?” He heard Grover ask Leo.

“Yeah, thanks. Let’s let them rest. Later, Jason, feel better,” Leo called out..

Jason managed to say something along the lines of, “Mmhm!” before the sound of receding footsteps signaled their friends’ departure.

As soon as he was sure they were gone, he tore his hand away from his mouth. “You’re *such* an asshole,” he hissed at the man between his legs.

Percy didn’t respond, he just winked at him and sucked his dick back into his mouth, this time letting go of the base of it to push against Jason’s chest so he was leaning back again. After that, he let it slip down Jason's stomach and up his shirt where it fanned out across his waist. Jason supported his weight on his elbows again and just let himself get lost in the sudden onset of sensation. Percy sped up, hollowing his cheeks and flicking his tongue against the sensitive head of his cock on the upstroke every now and then.

“Oh fuck,” Jason mumbled, taking off his glasses and tossing them onto his nightstand, his eyelids sliding closed as he tilted his head

back. Percy hummed in satisfaction and Jason blindly threaded one hand through his soft hair again, letting it rest there, rising and falling with Percy's movements.

He felt him get bolder, sinking down further, sucking a little harder, moaning around him. Curiosity got the better of him and he peeked down to watch, but the background behind Percy wasn't his room.

The hazy interior of their first hotel room surrounded them. His heart shot up into his throat and his eyes flew open. He blinked and his room was back to normal, but the now-familiar tug of an oncoming memory danced around the edge of his consciousness.

"No, no, no, no, no, Percy, stop. Stop!" He whispered as loud as he dared, his fingers tightening in Percy's thick hair.

Percy got the message, thankfully, and pulled off him, breathing heavy. His eyes were slightly unfocused as he looked around the room quickly. He'd seen it too. They watched each other warily for a few seconds and then visibly relaxed when the pull of the memory eased and then disappeared entirely. They'd managed to successfully avoid it this time.

Jason laughed nervously. "That was close."

"Yeah, that would've sucked," Percy murmured absently, staring up at him with an unreadable look on his face.

"I can't tell if you're making a joke about- *oh!* " He was caught off guard by Percy abruptly shoving him backwards again and climbing up on the bed next to him. "Percy, what are you-" Percy threw one of his legs over Jason's hips, straddling his waist. He leaned down and kissed him.

Jason's brain failed him, but his body knew exactly what it wanted, reacting before he told it to. His lips responded enthusiastically, parting to let Percy's tongue slip between them to dance with his. Somehow one of his hands ended up inside Percy's shirt where it splayed across the side of his ribs, his other hand tangling back into his hair. Percy shifted on top of him and his clothed erection brushed against his naked one, insistent and needy. Fuck. What were they doing? Where was this leading?

His brain finally started to catch up to his body, but he wasn't sure if he was grateful for that or not, because with it came the doubts and worries. "Percy, wait," he mumbled against his lips when Percy pulled back for a quick breath. "Wait a min-mmmn…mmm..." Percy kissed him again, effectively cutting him off.

Jason got distracted, enjoying the warm weight of Percy on top of him and the slick slide of their tongues. He felt a hand slip under his shirt, bunching it up until his midriff was exposed, then skating back down his stomach. His abdominal muscles twitched as Percy's hand skirted over them, it's direction still very clearly heading *down.*

Before it reached its destination, Jason dropped his hand from Percy's side and grabbed it. Percy leaned up a little, a question on his lips, and Jason used the opportunity to push him back further with his other hand, so he was almost sitting straight up. They were both breathing heavily and Percy's pupils were blown wide as he flicked his gaze down between them to where Jason had a hold of his wrist.

Jason swallowed hard. "I thought this was a bad idea," he whispered in the silence of his room.

"It is," Percy whispered back. "Do you want me to go?"

“...no,” he breathed, barely audible. Percy nodded once, jerkily. “But what are we doing?” Jason asked.

Percy flashed his teeth in a short, soundless laugh, averting his eyes as he rolled his hips pointedly. “What does it *feel* like we’re doing?”

“Maybe the better question is: *why* are we doing this? It's...” He trailed off, unsure how to continue.

“The last time.” Percy said firmly. Jason looked up at him with a silent question in his gaze. “This will be the last time.” Percy gently grabbed Jason’s hand from where it was still on his wrist and guided it up, settling it over his chest. Jason could feel the rapid *thumpthumpthump* of his heart racing through his shirt. “Right now, while we’re sober.”

Jason’s mouth was suddenly very dry. “And, what, you think that if we do this without being influenced by anything, then it might help us...figure some stuff out?,” he guessed. Percy nodded. Jason exhaled forcefully, watching Percy rise and fall with the motion of his body. “Okay. But, we *have* to tell the girls about this time too. They deserve the truth.”

“Of course. We’ll tell them everything, the alternative hadn’t even crossed my mind,” Percy said, his voice steady and honest.

“Okay,” he said, “last time.”

“Yep,” Percy replied. After a moment's pause, during which neither of them moved or said anything, Percy looked down at his chest where their hands were still piled together and asked, “Um, this is a really bad idea, isn’t it?"

They were starting to sound like a broken record with that phrase tonight. “The *fucking worst* ,” Jason confirmed before he broke their hands apart and pulled Percy down on top of him again, crashing their lips together, taking control of the kiss the second it started. He pushed Percy’s shirt up his body, breaking the kiss just long enough to slip it over his head and arms. It landed on the ground without a sound and his soon followed it. Percy ran his hand up Jason's arm and down his bare chest, along his sides, like he was mapping every inch of him, committing it to memory.

“Oh!” Percy exclaimed in surprise when Jason snaked an arm across his lower back and held him tightly as he flipped them, laying him down on the pillows.

He settled over him, one hand lazily making its way up Percy’s leg until it reached the waistband of his pajama pants. Percy lifted his hips and reached down to help him take them off. It was a little difficult to do while still kissing, but he couldn’t bring himself to pull away just yet.

His sweats were easier to get rid of, and then there was nothing between them. Their bodies pressed together, naked and hard, and Jason couldn’t help the satisfied moan he made. He finally broke the kiss to place a few across Percy’s jaw and down his neck, nipping at the skin stretched over his pounding jugular, being careful not to leave a mark.

“Jason,” Percy whimpered, “please touch me.” He was confused at first because he *was* touching him, his hands skimming over miles of heated skin, but then he felt Percy’s knees bend on either side of him and he realized what he meant.

He leaned back so he could see his face better but paused when he saw him laid out underneath him, looking almost the mirror image to

that moment that had stuck with him from the hotel room. Gone were the sparkles and colorful lights, but here in the monochrome moonlight he looked no less radiant. Percy met his stare and didn't look away, although his cheeks did darken a considerable amount.

"We…," Jason trailed off, feeling that little out-of-place twinge in his chest from earlier. He licked his lips and tried again. "We don't have any lube," he said, before catching sight of his bedside table out of the corner of his eye. It reminded him of when he'd emptied the contents of his pockets into it while he was changing. He hadn't been paying too much attention to what exactly had gone in there, but he was pretty sure-

He leaned over to open his drawer, reaching inside it, and his fingers encountered a cold plastic bottle. He brought it back over, holding it in front of him.

"Is that-"

"The bottle Will gave us last night? Yeah. I must've forgotten to throw it away in the hotel."

"Problem solved then." Percy said, squeezing his hips gently with his thighs. Jason hesitated and Percy asked, "What?"

"Um, do you want me to-do you want to be on top this time? I did it last time and I just, uh, I don't want you to think that I expect it that way. If you wanted to switch for this, I-" Percy cut off his rambling with a soft kiss.

"It's okay, I want to try it like this again," Percy whispered, their lips brushing together as he spoke. "But thank you for asking." He took the bottle and opened it, one hand holding Jason's steady as he poured

some of it out onto his fingers for him. Percy flipped the cap closed and set the bottle on the nightstand in the same motion that he used to lean up and capture Jason's lips again, his knees bending up a little more.

Percy wrapped his hands around Jason's arms, fingers digging into his biceps, as Jason's hand travelled down, down and then finally between his legs. Percy's breath hitched in his chest as Jason pushed a finger into his body, all of his muscles going tense and rigid. He stilled his hand and focused on kissing him until he relaxed enough to continue.

When Percy rotated hips downwards, impaling himself further on Jason's finger, he took that as his cue. He pushed in all the way before slowly pulling his finger back out, then pushing it back in again. He worked him open, eventually feeling confident enough to add a second finger, scissoring and twisting them. Percy's breaths came in little pants, his eyes closed, his forehead resting against Jason's.

"Hey," he murmured, "you doing alright? Do you need me to stop?"

The hands on his biceps tightened and Percy's eyes flew open, his gaze unfocused, pupils dilated like crazy. "*Please don't stop*," he breathed out in a hurry. He must have found that sensitive spot inside him because then Percy was gasping and pushing his hips down, like he was trying to fuck himself on his fingers. Percy threw an arm out and snatched the bottle of lube off the nightstand, pressing it into Jason's chest.

"Are you sure you're read-" Percy huffed impatiently, pulling the bottle away from his chest to pour some into his own hand, then reaching between them to slick Jason's cock up for him. He groaned, letting his head drop down onto Percy's shoulder as he stroked his dick a few times. "I'll take that as a yes."

He pulled his fingers out of Percy's hole and lined himself up, leaning one arm on the bed next to his head to hold his balance. When Percy's hand went back to its place on his bicep it smeared lube across his skin. He barely noticed.

They locked eyes, faces inches apart, and Jason felt something *shift* in that moment. Nothing physical happened, but the world seemed to pull inward, towards them.

At Percy's almost imperceptible nod, he began to push in smoothly, pausing once he was fully inside. Then he waited while Percy relaxed and got adjusted to accommodating his size.

It wasn't long before he was moving, their bodies sliding together sensually, slowly, the moonlight dancing across their skin. This wasn't...this wasn't like the other times. There was no energetic, pounding thrusts and silly teasing like the night of their wedding. This wasn't frantic and desperate like in the shower that morning. Percy's wide eyes as he stared back at him told him he felt the change as well.

One of Percy's hands fell away from his arm to land on the pillow next to his head. Jason took it, twining their fingers together. They both looked over them, Percy's fingers tightening almost imperceptibly.

When green eyes met his, there was no spark of a challenge, no playful competitiveness like what prompted Percy to take control in the hotel room. There were only raw emotions that went beyond the physical activities they were engaged in . The air was heavy around them, cloaked in their sighs and quiet moans. It was almost a tangible object, alive and charged with things unknown.

No. This certainly wasn't like the other times.

Jason kept going, one of Percy's legs draped loosely over his hip. They glided together languidly on his bed in this new, soft dance they'd stumbled their way into. This gentle thing that contained no ounce of aggressiveness-no bruising grips and pinned wrists or hips-was just that; gentle. Sweet. *Intimate.*

As Percy tilted his head up and Jason leaned down to meet him halfway in a kiss that was equally as tender, he realized something. This...this wasn't sex. This wasn't fucking.

What they were doing was making love.

And that terrified him. He could see it in Percy's eyes that he was scared too, but they didn't stop, *couldn't* stop.

Jason wasn't so sure if this was about sex anymore. If he ignored what their bodies were doing to each other, Jason could feel the underlying connection that ran between them. They felt... *right* . Being so near to him, staring into his eyes, feeling his heartbeat against his chest, how comfortable and grounded Jason felt in Percy's presence...it was alarmingly peaceful.

This wasn't supposed to happen. They were supposed to do this, and it was supposed to help them figure out what they were feeling, get this out of their system. It wasn't supposed to make things worse, complicate them *more* .

Percy threw an arm over his back, holding him tightly to his chest as Jason picked up the pace a fraction. Not much. Just enough to tip them over the edge. He'd been close for a while now but had held back, not wanting this to end, knowing things would never be the same again afterwards. But there was no delaying it any longer. Percy's gasps were starting to get sharper, shorter, coming more frequently, his nails leaving little crescent indentations in Jason's skin

where they dug into his back. Jason's body was growing warmer, losing the rhythm and simply moving as it wished, chasing whatever friction and contact with Percy's that it could get.

Jason released his hand and shifted slightly so he could reach between them to grab ahold of Percy's straining cock, stroking it for him as he moved inside of him. Percy pulled him down for another kiss, his hand carding through the short hair on the back of Jason's head.

Percy came first with a muffled, breathy gasp, his beautiful body arcing up into his as he spilled over Jason's hand, painting them both. That was all it took for Jason; the sight of his lover lost in the throes of ecstasy, reaching for him, mumbling against his skin as he succumbed to the desires of his body. With one final roll of his hips, Jason buried himself inside of Percy and let his own orgasm wash over him while Percy mouthed at the side of his neck and trailed his fingers across his stinging back.

Percy was still clinging on to him when he groggily came back to himself, but he was no longer moving. He lay deathly still, his arms locked around Jason. He felt a blanket of dread settle over them. What happens now?

They breathed together, Percy staring up at the ceiling, Jason staring down at the pillows.

"Jason," Percy whispered.

They turned their heads to look at each other. Something in his eyes alarmed him. He looked shaken. Scared.

"Jason...please...please get off of me," Percy asked, still whispering.

Jason complied swiftly, pulling out of his body and rolling over onto the free space in the bed. Percy immediately hugged his arms to his chest and sat up, throwing his legs over the bed to sit at the edge. Jason copied him, pulling the blanket over their laps. They sat side by side, with nothing but the sounds of their breathing for company.

As it went on Jason felt the shift again, but this time it was tinged with trepidation. Oppressive and heavy, he felt a gap start to wedge itself between him and Percy, but he didn't know how to stop it. The air around them was thick with emotion and tension, almost choking him as he tried to breathe.

Say something! He mentally screamed at himself, feeling the pit growing deeper, wider. *Say something to him, damnit!* But he didn't know what to say. 'Thanks for the sex, it really confused me more?'. Yeah, *that* would go over well. 'This was supposed to help us figure out what's going on, but instead I think it just made it worse?'. No, that's no good either. As it was, their excuses for allowing themselves to do this in the first place were flimsy at best.

Jason wracked his brain for some way, *any way,* to salvage this situation, this friendship.

As the silence stretched on longer, so too did the chasm between them. They were sitting so close he could feel the heat radiating off of Percy's body, but he may as well have been miles away for all that it mattered. He couldn't bring himself to look at Percy, too worried that he'd catch anger or something like it in his expression, yet eventually his eyes wandered there on their own. But what he saw was much worse than anger.

Percy looked lost and...and *sad.* Like he was withdrawing into himself, closing himself off. Jason instinctually reached out to put a hand on his shoulder, to comfort him, but Percy actually *flinched* away from

the touch. He tried not to take it too personally, he probably would have done the same.

“D-Don’t, I-I…I’m sorry that I-,” Percy stuttered, “I’m sorry, this-we shouldn’t have-”

“Bad idea,” Jason whispered.

Percy’s gaze flicked to him quickly and then to the door. Fuck.

Don’t grab him, Jason, he hates that. He’ll panic.

“Percy, wait, please don’t leave yet. We *really really* need to talk about this *now* .” He pleaded in vain. He wondered which was deeper at this point: Tartarus, or this trench growing between them?

“Talking clearly doesn’t work with us,” Percy replied in a monotone voice, as he reached down and slipped his pajama pants onto his legs. He stood and pulled them up in one fluid motion, letting the blanket slide off his lap, grabbing his shirt off the floor as he went. Jason stayed where he was.

Percy slipped his shirt on and was at the door faster than he thought possible. He unlocked the handle and opened the door a crack, then paused and glanced back at him, his gaze lingering first on the still-open sketchbook page and then Jason.

“I’m sorry,” Jason said, apologizing for so much in two simple, short words. They didn’t feel like enough. They *weren’t* enough.

Percy didn’t say anything, he just stepped out into the hallway, his eyes still leveled on Jason. Just like a few seconds ago, he shouldn’t have looked at his expression. Again, he expected something like anger or regret, but wound up with something worse. If he was being delusional and making things up, Jason would say that look was longing. But he wasn’t. And that look was closer to being detached, empty. Yes, much worse than anger. Anger he could deal with, could combat, but *this* ? He didn’t know how to tread these waters. They were unfamiliar to him. Percy had never looked at him like that before.

A flicker of *something* distorted his carefully blank features, but then the door was closing and he couldn't get a good look at it.

Jason flopped back down on his bed, legs still dangling off, and felt numb. What do you do after something like that? He considered sneaking down to the bathrooms to take a shower but a few seconds later he heard the water turn on and assumed Percy had gone straight there. There was more than one shower, but he didn’t want to make Percy feel trapped or cornered, so he just used his larger blanket, the one that was already messy, to wipe himself off before tossing it into a heap by his clothes hamper. He’d wash it tomorrow, it’s not like he’d get cold in his sleep.

He donned his pajamas again and crawled under the thin topsheet, laying face down. His pillow smelt like Percy’s shampoo. He wanted to scream into it to make himself feel better, but that would definitely wake the others up so he settled for gripping his sheets so tight his fingers turned white.

He hoped Percy wouldn't start trying to avoid him again.

Chapter End Notes

.....ooooor not.

Repelling Forces, Gravitational Pulls

Chapter Notes

> It's been a few weeks since I've updated and for that I'm sorry. I got very sick around Thanksgiving and it takes me awhile to recover when I get sick. It wasn't Covid, thankfully, but it kicked my ass nonetheless and I spent about two weeks mostly sleeping and being miserable while probably high on nyquil. I had no motivation for anything lol. I never respond well to cold medicine so I was practically useless for two weeks and then after I got better, holiday stuffs intervened. But, I'm back and so happy to be posting and writing again. The Tangled AU is pretty much on hiatus until after the Hols, but this ones going strong!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time- *Argo II*-

Percy's POV

He was avoiding Jason.

Did he decide that the minute he left Jason's room last night? No. The only thing on his mind in that moment had been trying to force his body to stay sitting instead of getting up and walking away like it had. Percy hadn't wanted to leave, he knew it was the wrong choice, but he couldn't help it.

Well, maybe some small part of himself *did* want to leave, but certainly not for his own benefit. For Jason's.

When someone Percy cares about looks at him with fear in their eyes, fear of *him,* his jerk reaction is to severe whatever emotion he's currently feeling and go blank. Nonthreatening. Completely remove

himself from the equation in order to make the other person comfortable. It was almost Pavlovian, the way he drew into himself like that.

So, when he had whispered Jason's name after they were done and Jason had turned those wide, scared blue eyes on him, lips parted slightly, Percy's brain had gone numb. Logically he knew that Jason wasn't actually scared *of* him, he was just terrified in the moment, the same as Percy, but he couldn't stop the response his body had been conditioned into. He tried, but it was useless.

He knew where this response originated from, it wasn't a mystery to him. It started where most of his problems usually start: Annabeth. More specifically, the way she'd reacted to him almost losing himself on Akhlys. He tried not to let what happened in Tartarus bother him too much, but he could never quite shake the feeling he got when he realized Annabeth was scared of *him* . That sick, stomach churning spike of *I'm doing something wrong.*

Something Jason said to him yesterday morning was bugging him. *Who are you when Annabeth lets you off your leash?*

Jason had that part wrong. Annabeth didn't put him on a leash, he put himself on one, she just unknowingly held the other end. Percy wasn't stupid, he knew a lot of what Jason said that morning was true, at least the parts concerning the way he acted around his girlfriend. The thing was, Percy didn't mind keeping himself in check in her presence, he preferred it. He loved her, how could he not? They'd been through everything together since they were twelve, he'd do anything for her. And if 'anything' included double thinking everything he did or said before he did it, if it made her feel safe and never look at him like *that* again, then so be it. She deserved to be happy after everything she's gone through over the years.

The only problem was that she constantly lived in the future, always two steps ahead, never one step in the present. She was so focused on

planning her happy future that Percy worried she'd never be able to experience happiness in the here and now. He did his best to help her with that but Annabeth seemed untethered to the present, and sometimes it was exhausting trying to keep up with her and not feel left behind. Not feel like just another scheduled task in her day planner. It was difficult to figure out just what exactly she needed him to be. That's why he likes spending so much time with Jason.

Jason. His current problem, and the reason he was still hiding in his bedroom at the moment.

Percy never felt like he needed to be anything other than himself with Jason. It was freeing and refreshing to be able to just *exist* around the guy. Jason felt grounded, comfortable, and normally just laying eyes on him immediately put Percy in a good mood.

But these last twenty four hours it just made his heart knock against his ribs and his palms start to sweat. And after last night, he was worried it would be ten times worse, because he'd finally allowed himself to accept the answer to the question he'd been asking himself in the taxi after they left Vegas: was he sexually attracted to Jason? Unequivocally, and in a way he'd never experienced before.

When he'd gone to Jason's room last night he hadn't planned on doing what they had done. He really did want to talk about everything that's been going on with them but, as he's discovered recently, being alone together apparently leads to everything *but* productive conversation. Conversation, which they desperately needed, because without it things seemed to get worse, as evidenced by current events.

Percy may have not wanted to leave Jason's room then, but now he wished he'd never gone there at all. That he hadn't started something he knew deep down they'd never be able to stop. They were like magnets, always pulling towards each other when they got too close, unable to fight it.

What he wished for even more was that this sexual attraction between them was just that: sexual. But it wasn't. At least not for him. That was painfully, blaringly clear now. What they'd engaged in last night hadn't been sex or even remotly *about* sex. Sure, the act itself was technically categorized as it but underneath was something deeper. Intimacy, if he had to put a word to it, but not intimacy of their bodies, although there had been *plenty* of that as well. Whatever it was, it had left his heart feeling raw, like he'd carved open his chest cavity and exposed it to the ruthless intensity of an unchecked lightning storm. That storm had helped itself, destroying and wrecking irreversible havoc with tender caresses, velvet sighs, catastrophic gentleness, and blue eyes the softest he'd ever seen on him.

Maybe he was wrong about that talk never happening. Didn't some people say actions could speak, or something along those lines? Percy thought that maybe they'd said plenty to each other last night without using their words, but there was something frustrating about this whole thing. He wasn't so sure he understood the language they'd used. It was there, inside him, familiar yet foreign, but he couldn't access it. It didn't matter what he did or how much he tried to find it. Perhaps it was locked away with the lost memories of the Vegas night. If he could just *remember* what started that night, he knew everything else would become a bit more clear.

Unfortunately, in order to get those memories back, he had to look through the photo album, and to do *that* he had to sit next to Jason. Which was counterproductive to his current plan of Avoid Him At All Costs .

He didn't know what to do about that so for right now he was content to just sit here on his bed and try to hold himself together long enough to figure out how to deal with all this shit. Annabeth would know how to fix this. She always had a plan for everything and even though all it would get him would be a metaphorical knife in the kidney, he longed for her to be here beside him. The urge to simply *talk* to her was overwhelming, her advice could solve any problem regardless of the situation or context.

They couldn't get home fast enough. Confessing would be hard, but it was necessary and after the hard part was over things could get back to normal.

He thought of the invisible wall that had slammed down between him and Jason as they'd sat on his bed in the imposing silence. The way his body had subconsciously jerked away from Jason's touch.

He hoped things could go back to normal after that...

Percy dropped his head into his hands and sighed. Why hadn't he *said* something? Anything? *I don't want this to ruin our friendship,* Jason had said in the shower yesterday. Well they'd fucked that up real quick. No harsh or mean words were spoken, but there was no denying the shift they'd both undoubtedly felt in their relationship.

Percy was kidding himself, they could never be the same after that.

With all of these confusing emotions and thoughts running wild through him, Percy did what he's always done in times of confusing feelings: he gathered them up and shoved them to the furthest corner of his mind in a file labeled *To Be Sorted Later.* Was it the most healthy way to deal with things? No, but it's something he's always done. Things always seemed easier when you put them off until later. When was later exactly? He wasn't positive, but he'd know it when it came to that.

Percy sighed again and wondered how long he could get away with sitting here before someone came to get him. He lifted his head to look over at the nightstand that had been Guido the lobster's perch for most of yesterday. It was currently empty. Percy had kicked the crustation out of his room when he'd finally returned here after his

scalding hot shower that had done nothing to erase the phantom touch of Jason's hands and kisses.

He'd stepped one foot inside his door and Guido had scuttled toward the edge of the table, brushing his curious antenne across his arm as Percy passed him to sit on his bed, towel wrapped around his waist. He hadn't wanted to put the same pajamas back on, worried they'd smell like Jason's room. Before he even got the chance to sit down, Guido had connected with his mind, his consciousness tinged with giddy happiness and a hint of teasing.

Well this is a surprise, Lord. I didn't expect you to come back here tonight.

Percy paused and slowly turned to look at the lobster. *What do you mean by that?* , he asked him telepathically.

Guido gave him the lobster equivalent of a shrug. *You smell like your mate. I figured you'd sleep with him after you, uh, mated. That's usually what humans do, isn't it? That's what you did last night.*

I do not!, he protested, *I just took a shower. And it wasn't like that, Guido, we're not…mates.*

Do to, Guido snarked, waving his pincers around like he was trying to emphasize a point. *I've got a great sense of smell,* he added while he brushed his antenne on his arm again. Percy realized he was scenting him and remembered that lobsters had incredible scent receptors, good enough to be on par with a bloodhound. He hastily took a step back, out of his reach.

Don't do that, Percy chastised him.

There's nothing to be ashamed of, Lord. It's good that you smell like him, it's important for mates to claim each other. Completely natural. Guido's connection to his mind soured fractionally with what he could only describe as admonishment or maybe indignancy. *What's* not *natural is abandoning your mate so soon after-*

"Okay, that's enough out of you, he's *not* my mate and you don't know what you're talking about," Percy muttered as he reached out and plucked the lobster up off his table with two fingers situated behind his pincer arm joints so he couldn't snap at him. It didn't stop the crustacean from trying though. His claws angled backwards, opening and closing rapidly, but Percy's arm was just out of his reach. "You're going to go sleep in the bathroom where you can't bug me."

No, you can't do this! Put me down right now! This is unjust, Lord! You know I'm right, his smell is all over you. Your mind feels sad and lonely, you're hurting yourself by doing this. Guido gave up on trying to pinch him and just hung there limp as Percy opened the door and stepped into the hallway.

A splash of blond colored hair in the darkness of the hall made his heart leap into his throat and he almost lost his grip on Guido, but a split second later Will's sleepy face registered and he almost sighed in relief.

Will froze in his tracks, a glass of water held in one hand, the other on his and Nico's doorknob.

"Will," Percy whispered and nodded at the other late night wanderer before turning on his heel to start towards the bathroom.

"Percy, wait a minute," Will said. Percy cursed under his breath and turned back around. Will's eyes flicked from his face down to Guido, who had renewed his struggling when he'd seen the other human, and

then back up, pausing briefly around his shoulders before settling back on his face. Percy tried not to feel judged as he stood there in a towel, his hair still wet from the shower, with a lobster in his hand. “What’s with Guido?” he asked.

I’m being exiled! Don’t believe a word he says, yellow haired human! Lord is sad and has abandoned his mate, you have to convince him to go back to him. Don’t let him do this to himself! Guido yelled in objection, but out loud it just sounded like faint clacking as his armored legs tapped against his carapace and his tail flicked angrily. Thankfully Will couldn’t understand lobster.

“His gills are getting dry and I don’t want him suffocating, so I’m going to put him in one of the bathroom sinks overnight. He won’t cause any problems,” he added with a pointed glare at Guido.

Lies! Filthy lies! My gills aren’t dry yet, I could go another three hours, this is just an excuse. Please, at least talk to Jason and tell him-, Guido’s desperate pleas were drowned out by Will’s response.

“Ah, well that makes sense I guess,” he said, one finger tapping absently on his glass. “Hey, do you know if Jason’s asleep yet? I wanted to-”

Percy bristled, his defenses flaring up unjustly. “How should *I* know? I was in *my* room,” he said, his tone far too harsh for a normal response to a legitimate question.

Will didn’t seem too fazed luckily, like he didn’t catch the slightly hostile edge to his words. “Yeah, alright, I was just curious if you’d seen him recently. Leo asked me to tell him he needed his help with something tomorrow. If you see him before I do, could you pass that along?”

Percy had no intentions of doing anything remotely close to that any time soon. He gritted his teeth but smiled. “For sure, will do.”

Will nodded his thanks and turned the knob and Percy took his chance to leave, but-

“Oh! One more thing, Percy. I was actually looking for you earlier, but you weren’t in your room, wh-”

“I didn’t realize I had to ask permission before I left my room,” Percy spit out, trying not to let too much irritation and defensiveness creep into his voice. He felt cornered and even though Will’s question was, once again, probably innocent and had a perfectly normal reason to be asked, he had the urge to end this conversation now. “I’m tired, and I’d like to drop my lobster off at the sink and go to bed. Have a good night,” He said curtly, turning back around, but not before seeing the glint of Nico’s eyes peering through the cracked-open door of his and Will’s room. Will, again, seemingly hadn’t picked up on the mood of the situation.

“Alright, see you later, Percy,” Will said as he disappeared around the corner.

Guido talked non-stop the whole way to the bathroom and purposefully flicked his tail to splash water at Percy when he dropped him into the filled sink. Percy just deflected it back at the lobster and promptly left, speed walking back to his room. The second his door shut, he heard Jason’s open and Percy froze, his hand still on the handle.

Another creak resonated in the silence and he heard Will’s hushed voice say, “Hey, Jason, whatcha doing?”

Jason's deep timber answered him from somewhere between their doors, "Just, uh, shower. Couldn't sleep, so I thought it'd help. Why, what are you doing?"

A floorboard creaked further down the hall as Will presumably stepped out of his room. "Yeah, you look like you've had a rough night, a shower will probably help. Hopefully there's still hot water left. I was just about to go get a glass of water, need anything from the kitchen?" *Liar,* Percy thought, recalling the full glass he'd had when Percy talked to him. "By the way, Leo needs your help with something tomorrow around noon." He assumed Jason had shaken his head to the question Will asked him because then Will's footsteps were getting further and further away until they disappeared altogether.

Jason was quiet for a minute before he took a step and then stopped again, this time right outside Percy's door. Percy held his breath and prayed that he'd just keep walking. He didn't think he was strong enough to see him so soon after what they'd done and not do something stupid. He needed time to think and process.

After a tense moment, where he swore they could sense each other's nervous energy, Jason's steps padded off in the direction of the bathrooms. He had a second of panic that Guido would mouth off at him before remembering that no one else spoke lobster.

He never heard Will come back and a few minutes later a pair of lighter footsteps, that he was pretty sure belonged to Nico, left the hallway towards the kitchen.

Sleep that night hadn't come easy, especially while he could hear the distant shower going and knew that Jason was probably doing the same thing he had been when he was in there. Hands pressed to the wall, head bowed, while the water poured over him and cut off all sound. He was grateful that Jason hadn't followed him to the shower

directly after he'd left this room.

When he'd finally drifted off, it was to a restless slumber plagued with dreams of laughing scarred lips, movie nights full of jokes and playful shoving, and the rasp of a pencil over a page as Jason worked on his art contently while Percy laid on his bed and listened to the quiet drone of his marine bio audio textbook. Things with Jason had always been easy, comfortable, but now the blade of finality hung over their heads on a fraying string.

He'd woken up this morning surprisingly well rested despite the absurd amount of times he'd had to force himself back to sleep throughout the night.

He hadn't heard Jason's door open, so he figured he'd either left before Percy had finally decided to get up, or was still in his room. Which was why Percy hadn't left yet, but now his stomach protested loudly and he resigned himself to making a quick trip to the kitchen. Hopefully without running into Jason along the way.

The hallway was empty and Jason's door was firmly shut, so he tiptoed all the way to the kitchen. He rounded the last turn as someone inside the kitchen spoke. Percy skidded to a halt as Jason's voice washed over him. He didn't even hear what he was saying to Leo, too focused on trying not to make a noise as he stared at the back of Jason's blond hair. His heartbeat thundered in his ears.

Forget breakfast, that could wait. He wasn't even hungry.

He took a quiet step backwards and promptly bumped into someone.

"Morning, Percy!" Grover said loudly from right behind him. He nearly jumped out of his skin. Grover put his hands on Percy's back

and pushed him through the doorway into the kitchen as Leo and Jason turned to look at them. Percy was too stunned to fight against Grover's pushy attitude. "About time you ate something, I was worried after you skipped dinner last night. What do you want to eat?"

Jason locked eyes with him and all the color drained out of his already pale face, his partially eaten bagel raised halfway to his mouth as if he'd been in the middle of attempting to take a bite.

Percy's heart shredded itself up all over again in that moment, begging him to tell it what to feel, how to react. Being the focus of Jason's attention suddenly had him thrown back to last night when nothing at all in the world existed besides them. The weight of his strong body settling over him, the miles and miles of toned muscle, the incredible gentleness that Jason had held him with. Their fingers twining together on the pillow next to his head. Every breath was the rise of the moon and every brush of the lips was a picturesque sunset over the ocean's horizon. Percy was kind of an expert on earth shaking matters, his father being *the* Earthshaker and all, but in that moment with that man, the earth fell away from his feet and he was lost. He was a ship at sea with no compass, no stars, only the wind to guide his sails.

Percy couldn't remember how to breathe. He thought maybe Jason had siphoned the air out of his lungs or took the oxygen out of the room, but after a second of forcing his chest to expand he could breathe again.

As quick as the blood had left Jason's face, it came rushing back, his skin flushing a deep red. He could almost feel the heat radiating off of him from here.

Percy was avoiding Jason. Was *trying* to avoid Jason.

And from the way Jason hastily stuffed the rest of his bagel into his mouth and attempted to flee the room through the nearest exit, he was pretty sure Jason was avoiding *him* too.

Leo tried to catch Jason's arm as he brushed past him. “Woah, where are you going? Where’s the fire, man? Just kidding, I’m the fireman!,” Leo joked, pointing two thumbs at himself, but it fell on deaf ears.

Jason swallowed his bagel and said, “Uh, I gotta-there’s a-” he met Percy’s eyes again and all Percy could do was look away under the intensity he was suddenly subjected to. “I have to...laundry stuff.” He was out the door before he’d even finished his sentence.

“What’s his problem?” Grover asked, leaning a hip against the counter as Leo shrugged and opened a cabinet to rifle through the food.

“Laundry, apparently,” Leo muttered as he shuffled boxes around. “What do you want for breakfast, Grover? Poptarts?” he asked, popping his head out of the cabinet with a box of the aforementioned tarts.

Before Percy could say anything, Leo was scrunching his face up and shaking his head. “Ah, yeah that’s right, these have gelatin in them, sorry man, my bad,” Leo said, tossing the box back into the cabinet and pulling out a different one. Percy didn’t even see what it was, just accepted the plate of food that was handed to him as Grover and Leo talked incessantly in the background.

He mechanically ate his breakfast, not tasting any of it, too lost in his own thoughts. He hadn’t expected to see Jason so soon and it left him feeling empty and numb. He couldn’t explain it, but he wanted to follow after him just as much as he wanted to turn and run the other direction.

His thoughts were interrupted when Nico strutted into the kitchen dragging Jason behind him. Will trailed in shortly after and, in what was obviously a rehearsed act, Grover took hold of Percy's arm and dragged him into the dining room after the other three. Percy tried to back out, but Leo stood right behind him with a wide smile on his face, Frank and Coach Hedge materializing on either side of him.

He was so focused on not looking at Jason that he almost missed what Nico was saying.

"-to look at another page. You both promised we would after breakfast and everyones eaten already. I, for one, would *love* to get the rest of my memories back. Going through the book might help the rest of us, remember?" Nico said, pushing Jason down onto his regular chair.

Fuck, the book. Again, not something he was prepared to see right now, but they *had* told the others they would do this.

The chair that was usually reserved for him, the one right next to Jason's, was left empty and waiting for him, but while Nico was busy trying to get Jason to stay seated, Percy made a hasty decision and hurried to the other end of the table to claim NIco's chair. A few of the others shot him odd looks, but he ignored them and flashed a small smile at Will. They didn't have assigned seats per se, but it was an unspoken rule that Percy and Jason always sat together, and never at the head of the table. Percy was disrupting the natural flow of things and the ripple in the pond was noticeably large.

Jason, momentarily forgetting his severe interest in the tabletop, looked across at him, a betrayed and offended look running across his features. It was only there for a split second before his face closed off and his jaw tensed. He averted his eyes. The room was uncomfortably silent. Nico opened his mouth like he was going to protest the new seating chart, but then his mouth closed and he gingerly sat down in

Percy's seat.

Well, if their friends hadn't already guessed something was off between them, they'd know for sure now.

Coach Hedge cleared his throat and leaned forward to tap a finger on the wedding album that was laying on the table. "Well, no need to beat around the bush. Pitter patter, let's get at 'er, kids."

Neither he nor Jason moved to open the book. The silence grew and thickened.

"Uh, guys?" Frank said. "One of you two needs to open…"

Frank trailed off as Percy jerked an arm out across the table and flipped the book open. He pretended he didn't notice Jason lean incrementally away from his hand. Percy grit his teeth and angrily flipped the pages until he passed the casino pictures. It took him a minute to work up the courage to actually look at the new page.

He'd never felt so awkward around Jason before and it was throwing him off, everything about this was throwing him off. He was disoriented over here on the other side of the table without Jason's warm presence next to him. It was like when you took a nap during the middle of the day and woke up four hours later with no concept of time or what year it was. It made his stomach churn. This was wrong, they shouldn't be repelling away from each other.

He'd compared them to magnets earlier in his musings, always being pulled together, gravitating towards the other. But now they were magnets that had been flipped and their normal pull had turned into a push. If one got too close, the other would move away.

Percy was exhausted and it wasn’t even nine in the morning.

Someone said something else but it went right over his head and he decided to let it, leaning towards the book so he could see the pictures better. Jason’s elbow slipped off the table, but Percy didn’t take his eyes off the page, determined to get this over with as fast as he could.

Chapter End Notes

> It's been a few weeks since I've updated and for that I'm sorry. I got very sick around Thanksgiving and it takes me awhile to recover when I get sick. It wasn't Covid, thankfully, but it kicked my ass nonetheless and I spent about two weeks mostly sleeping and being miserable while probably high on nyquil. I had no motivation for anything lol. I never respond well to cold medicine so I was practically useless for two weeks and then after I got better, holiday stuffs intervened. But, I'm back and so happy to be posting and writing again. The Tangled AU is pretty much on hiatus until after the Hols, but this ones going strong!

Page After Page

Chapter Notes

A shorter one today, still been busy with holiday stuff and my birthday which was on the 26th, but there's a little less angst/hurt in this one, so hopefully that makes up for it.

Disclaimer for this chapter: I know next to nothing about architecture lmao

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Percy's POV

The page open on the table appeared to pick up almost directly after the last page's events. The first picture was right outside the Mirage casino and it showed the group splitting up. He and Jason went one way down the sidewalk and the others went the opposite, and that was it for the first picture. It went dark and then reset. The second looked pretty much like the first one. In fact the last two pictures were similar as well. They all showed Jason and him wandering through the streets of Las Vegas at a leisurely pace, occasionally sipping their drinks. Percy assumed they were looking for a place to get married.

He stared at the page and waited to get sucked into the memory. And then he stared some more.

"Nothing's…happening…" Jason muttered.

"Yeah, I don't feel any different," Percy said, looking up from the book. The others were watching them with anxious expressions.

Hedge fidgeted in his seat. “Maybe try going to the next page. The cover photo didn’t give you a memory either.”

“Coach, I don’t…know if that’s such a good idea. Didn’t-shouldn’t it go in *order?”* Frank asked. “It just seems, uh, seems like the thing we should do.”

“Well if it’s not working-” Hedge started.

A soft *swish* whispered through the room as Jason mechanically turned the page. Percy’s heart cinched in his chest as Jason let his hand come to rest on the table next to his. He could feel the warmth from it, it was so close. He wanted to take it, weave their fingers together, and feel him squeeze back.

Instead, he kept his hand perfectly still and didn’t take his eyes off the page. He could feel Jason looking at him for a brief moment before returning his gaze back to the book.

The new page showed almost the same thing as the previous one. Just them, walking around Vegas, laughing, pointing at things, walking hand in hand.

Until the last picture, that is.

This one started out the same, but when Percy brought their joined hands up and kissed the back of Jason’s, the two of them stopped walking abruptly. At first he couldn’t see why, but then his picture self’s face twisted into an incredulous expression and turned to look at someone out of the frame. Jason’s picture self’s face hardened considerably. The view changed and showed a man about their height lug himself up off a parked Harley and swagger over to them. His leather jacket had a *Desert Rider’s* patch on the breast, but the guy

wasn't Axel. This dude's face was way younger, pockmarked by old acne scars and his hair was an awful bleach blond.

Biker guy stopped in front of them and leaned in, getting into picture Percy's face. Percy mouthed something at the guy and the biker's lips opened in an ugly sneer and he uttered a few words that Percy couldn't make out by lip reading. Picture Jason headbutted the guy out of nowhere and he lurched backwards, losing his balance as he fell on his ass clutching his now presumably broken nose. The picture went black and reset.

Percy couldn't help chancing a glance up at the real Jason. He was looking bewildered at the picture as it showed him headbutting the guy again.

Next to Jason, Leo sucked in a sharp breath. "Damn, Jason. The fuck did that guy do?"

"I…I don't know." Jason looked up at Percy and all he could do was shrug and look away. "I still don't feel like it's working. I don't know why."

"Try another page," Hedge suggested again.

This time Percy was the one to flip to the new page. This one seemed…chaotic at best. Percy was pretty sure they were about to meet Axel and finally figure out the mystery surrounding the 'turf war' they'd apparently been a part of.

As soon as that thought left his head, the first picture started moving. Their picture selves were watching the biker guy try to scramble back to his feet, amused smirks on their faces. Those smirks were quickly replaced with startled looks as the camera angle changed and Percy

could see about seven Harleys screeching to a stop next to the first guy's bike. The leader, Axel, because no one could mistake that long red braid hanging down his back, barely had his bike stopped before his foot was kicking out the stand and he was swinging his leg over the seat. Axel tore his helmet off, took one look at his biker member on the pavement, then to Percy and Jason standing over him, and lunged.

Picture Percy dodged Axel's first swing at him and responded with one of his own. Real Percy was honestly impressed that he could reach Axel's face, but his fist connected squarely with the dude's nose. The picture went black.

The next three just got more chaotic from there as more bikes sped around the corner, filling the empty parking lot with leather-clad gang members. Percy wasn't exactly sure when, but at some point he noticed that about half the bikers' leather vests were embroidered with a heart wrapped in barbed wire instead of the *Rider's* desert patch. Under the heart were the words *Vegas Acolytes.*

In the second to last picture Axel elbowed the bleach blond biker, the one that had first picked a fight with them, in the face. The guy went down again.

Axel squared up with Percy and Jason on either side, backing him up, as three *Acolytes* charged at them. Sometime during the fight they had teamed up with the *Riders* against the *Acolytes.* He wondered what had caused that to happen, but he didn't end up getting an answer.

The last picture on the page showed the fight as it was winding down, a suspicious looking small black and gray blur darting under the legs of the bikers as they fell or were bodily thrown. Thalia, Percy realized with surprise. The looping scene ended with Axel smiling at what Percy assumed was his cell phone's camera, posing for a picture with Percy and Jason. All three of them smiled wide, bloody smiles as they made the 'rock-on' hand sign that he's come to know as the *Riders'* call

sign. Behind the trio Thalia crossed her arms and rolled her eyes at them while Harleys kicked up clouds of dust as they peeled out of there. The picture went black.

Still, nothing tugged at his consciousness.

"So *that's* where you guys picked up Thalia!" Grover exclaimed. "You never did say where she popped up at."

The only sound in the room was Jason gritting his teeth as he angrily flipped the page. Grover closed his mouth and settled back into his chair.

Percy was getting pretty frustrated too. Why weren't they *remembering* anything yet? He staved off the icy fear that was sure to have taken root in Jason's stomach too. What if the memories had just stopped, no longer worked?

"This is ridiculous, why isn't anything happening?" he muttered, eyes flitting around the page, trying to keep his voice even.

He breathed out slowly, trying to calm his irritation and underlying fear. He'd give this last page a chance, but if nothing happened, he was going to get up and walk away.

The four pictures on this page just showed more of them exploring Vegas, but this time with Axel and, occasionally, Thalia in tow. Nothing really interesting or new, except for one picture that showed them talking to Thalia as her eyebrows crept further and further up her forehead. When they stopped talking, she threw her head back and laughed, her eyes sparkling with delight, before trying to hug them both at once like she had in the cover page photo.

The very last picture ended with them stopping outside of a large chapel that looked very simple compared to the other garish, frilly pink monstrosities that littered this town. The building was white with a church-like steeple decorated with twisting, elegant accents around the windows and bell opening. A sign out front declared *Saint Dwynwen's. Mae 'na groeso i bawb. All are welcome.*

"Hey, that's the place you guys got married at," Leo said, pointing to the chapel.

Jason said something too low for Percy to catch.

"What was that?" Leo asked.

Jason had that distracted look that usually came over him when he was deep focused in the middle of painting. His eyes studied the chapel every time it came into the picture. "That sculpting around the windows, that's an art nouveau architectural style, but it's got bits of gothic to it. Very late sixteenth century-esque, but on a much smaller scale then you usually see it. And of course, you know, very recently built. Likely in the last ten or so years. It's probably inspired by some old European buildings. British, or something around there. French, maybe…" he trailed off, seemingly lost in his thoughts.

Percy wished something would distract him as much as this building was doing to Jason. Because he knew what the next page in this book would be.

The wedding. And he wasn't sure if he was ready to experience that yet, not with how raw and vulnerable his heart still felt after the emotional warfare he forced it into last night and this morning.

“Impressive, Grace! I see the university is doing you some good,” Hedge praised, nodding his head proudly. “Axel actually suggested that place, it’s owned by some Welsh family that’s been in the area for a long time. Some distant cousins of Axel or something, if I remember right.”

“Welsh?” Jason muttered, “yeah that’s about right for the time period of the-”

Whatever Jason was going to say filtered off into a muffled, disjointed ringing as Percy suddenly realized the table was coming at him at an alarming rate. Will managed to catch him before he actually hit the table and he blearily saw Nico do the same for Jason, whose eyelids were starting to slide shut.

Finally, he thought, as he let the memory grab hold of his thoughts and drift away.

Chapter End Notes

Saint Dwynwen is an actual Welsh saint. She is the patron saint of lovers. She is also the patron saint of sick animals, which while not relevant to this story, is a pretty cool fact. I believe her name is pronounced Dwin-wen. If that's wrong, I apologize.

The Welsh phrase on the sign out front directly translates to 'Everyone is welcome'. I did not get this from google translate, rather I did a little research into welsh variations of welcoming someone into a home, as a result of a thank you, and just in general as it's used here. I am not Welsh and I don't speak Welsh, unfortunately, so hopefully this translation is correct and used in the correct way. If you speak Welsh and see that I've used this incorrectly, feel free to let me know. The Welsh aspect of this chapel is not plot relevant and will most likely only be mentioned once or twice, but I felt like if I was going to model it after a culture then I wanted to give it as much respect as I could. All in all, Saint Dwynwen's story is sad and beautiful at the same time, and if you enjoy little dips into random history every now and then, I highly suggest you give her a research.

Meeting

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS THE USE OF HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGES IN TWO INSTANCES. PLEASE PLEASE BE AWARE OF THAT.

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-Flashback-Streets of Vegas-

Percy's POV

"Are you *sure* you don't want me to come with you two?" Coach Hedge asked again.

Beside him, Jason stifled a tiny laugh. Percy nodded at Hedge, again, and said, "Yes, Coach, we'll be fine. Grover has our empathy link open so if anything happens he'll know. We'll find you guys later, go have fun."

The coach looked like he wanted to protest some more but in the end he finally relented and let them split off from the group with a

worried glance back and a half-hearted wave. Hedge was a worry-wart. They were already eloping, for the gods' sake, what else could they get into tonight?

Vegas was, surprisingly, a peaceful town. Certainly not *quiet,* but walking through the crowded, bustling streets with Jason's hand gently holding his, Percy was comfortably content. For the first thirty minutes or so they just wandered aimlessly, people watching, sometimes stopping to observe the street performers or showgirls. A few times, as they were passing dead end alleys that seemed to escape the notice of the mortals, they saw some smaller, mostly harmless, monsters darting through the shadows. Jason got a little edgy when a particularly bold rat-like monster stopped to sniff in their direction but Percy was quick to point out that the thing caught one whiff of their scent and bolted in the opposite direction. He was a little surprised that nothing larger had caught up with them yet, but in a town this chaotic and filled with various smells he supposed they were probably masked pretty well.

The end goal to this little side trip was to find everything Hera had asked them for. So far they'd found neither a place to get married nor a mortal officiant, and they still hadn't puzzled out who the witnesses would be, but they *did* find a little food cart that sold great funnel cakes, so that was a plus.

Percy honestly spent more time looking *at* Jason than looking for a place to marry him, but he couldn't really help it. The alcohol was buzzing pleasantly through his veins and he kept getting distracted by Jason's laugh and smile. And, really, that laugh warmed him more than the alcohol ever could, sounding like happiness and home. It made him think of lazy afternoons in the California sun on the rolling hills of Bacchus' gardens, or a stroll around the canoe lake at Camp Half-Blood.

Percy was only vaguely aware of where they'd wandered off to, still paying more attention to Jason then his surroundings. When Jason paused the story he was telling to take a drink, Percy brought their joined hands up and brushed his lips across the back of Jason's hand.

The corner of Jason's lips tilted up softly and he opened them as if he was about to say something, but a voice across the parking lot cut into their isolated bubble of peace.

" *Faggots,* " a nassly, distainful voice scoffed. The guy it had come from took a swig off his beer bottle.

They froze and Percy turned his head to stare the guy down in disbelief. He seemed to take that as a challenge because the next thing he knew, the formerly bored looking guy was heaving himself up off his parked Harley and swaggering over to them. Percy wasn't scared, this dude looked like every classic schoolyard bully he'd ever fought: too cocky for his own good, too much bark, too little bite to back it up. He could tell this guy felt like he was something special, though, from the way he walked to his ill-fitting leather jacket and frosted hair tips.

The biker reached them, focusing his attention on Percy, leaning in too close for comfort and sneering enough that Percy could see flakes of tabacco chew stuck in his teeth.

"What did you just say?" Percy asked him quietly. He'd heard him plain as day the first time but he was honestly just curious if the guy was going to say it to his face up close and personal. His sword hand itched to reach in his pocket and grab his pen, but the rational part of his brain reminded him that however homophobic and vile this dude was, he was still a mortal and Celestial Bronze wouldn't do shit to him. The itch to draw his sword morphed into a desire to form a fist and introduce it to the side of this guy's jaw, and the alcohol in his blood only fueled this desire.

The biker's grin grew larger and he widened his stance to get in his face some more, leaning closer. "I called you a faggot, bitch. Why, what are you-"

Jason moved so fast it startled even Percy. The guy in front of him didn't even get a chance to realize what was happening before he was stumbling back, clutching his face as blood dripped out from his fingers and down his chin. Percy had heard the distinctive crunch of cartilage collapsing and knew that if the guy's nose wasn't a flat purple mess by morning, he'd be the luckiest asshole alive.

A first he thought Jason had decked him with his fist like Percy had been gearing up to do, but as the biker tripped over a cement parking block and fell on his ass, he realized he was still holding Jason's dominant hand and his other hand was calmly fixing the mess his hair had fallen into when he'd headbutted him.

The biker howled and tried to stand back up while spitting curses and blood like it was going out of style. One of his bloody hands slipped on the parking block and he fell backwards again. Jason laughed at him and Percy couldn't help but join in. He usually didn't delight in the pain of others, but he'd make an exception this time.

A low rumbling started to pick up, rapidly getting louder until it was almost a deafening roar. The biker on the ground shot a glance behind him right as a few beams of light splashed across the bricks of a building. Seven more bikers cruised into the parking lot and pulled up next to the bike that had recently been vacated.

"You're gonna regret that, you fuckers," the biker snarled, flashing his bloody teeth in a short, gruesome smile.

The first guy that got off his bike was huge. Not only tall, but buky with muscle as well, build like a freight train. Or Frank if he was a foot taller and on steroids. Percy saw their mistake as the biker was furiously yanking off his helmet. The leather jacket the guy was wearing was nearly identical to the biker that had tried to pick a fight with them.

“Um, Jason-” he muttered, taking an involuntary step backwards and pulling Jason with him.

Jason’s jaw tensed. “Yeah, I see it.”

The red haired biker didn’t even hesitate. He took one look at his gang member laying on the cement bleeding, and lunged. For a big guy he was unexpectedly fast, and Percy had maybe a split second for his brain to register that he needed to dodge the very large fist coming at his face. He barely managed it, feeling the wind disruption from how close it came. Beside him, Jason was occupied with the other bikers that had jumped in the fight.

His battle instincts kicked in and, in what seemed like slow motion, Percy grabbed the red haired guy’s wrist, pulling down as hard as he could on it to knock the guy off balance. It thankfully worked and he stumbled forward, his face coming down a few inches as he tried to adjust to the force.

Well. He *had* wanted to punch somebody just a few minutes ago.

Percy’s fist connected with the guy’s nose, feeling it break much like his gang member’s had. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Jason swipe someone’s feet out from under them, coming back up with just enough time to catch a different guy’s fist and return one of his own.

The familiar exhilaration of battle burned through his veins, the alcohol speeding it along, magnifying it. In the very distant recesses of his mind he felt the tiniest flicker of alarm and worry flaring up from Grover’s side of the empathy link. Percy ignored it and shut the link down. He’d need every one of his senses for this eight on two fist fight.

Scratch that. There were *definitely* more than eight bikers in this parking lot. More bikes came screeching up from a different end of the parking lot.

Nice to Meet You, Let's Fight

Chapter Notes

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-Flashback Continued-Streets of Vegas-

Percy's POV

"Oh, yer backup finally here, huh? Won't matter much, punk, your people are gonna die. You fucked this meeting up *bad!* " the red haired biker snarled at him, breaking Percy's grip on his wrist.

What?

"What?"

He didn't get the benefit of an answer. The biker hooked his foot around Percy's ankle and sent him down to the ground. Reflexively, he rolled away from the kick that was aimed at his ribs and came up swinging. The few blows he landed on the guy's torso didn't seem to slow him down much, and he couldn't quite reach his face since the guy had regained his posture, so for the most part he tried to avoid getting flattened.

What had started out in slow motion sped up times five. He wasn't exactly sure what they'd gotten themselves into, but leather wearing bikers were fighting other leather-clad bikers who were fighting him and Jason, and the first guy was still on the ground trying to stand up but he kept getting jostled around. Percy was pretty successful in dodging most of the red haired dude's swings, but it was only a matter of time before he slipped up. Luckily the fist he did catch to the face wasn't at full momentum, otherwise he had no doubt he'd be out flat. A ring on the guy's hand grazed his lip, splitting the skin, but missing his teeth by a millimeter.

Percy backed up quickly to avoid another punch and accidentally bumped into someone. On instinct he whirled around, fist raised and ready to throw, but froze when he came face to face with Jason who was in the same position he was. Jason lowered his hand and flashed him a grin.

"Hey," he said, eyes wild, hair a mess. Beautiful.

Percy grinned back, his lip stinging from the bleeding split. "Hey yourself."

Jason's eyes zeroed in on something just over his shoulder as the hair on the back of his neck rose up. Percy spun to the side as a fist with a bloody ring whizzed past his ear. Jason caught the fist and, in a feat of strength that Percy found both impressive and extremely hot, Jason turned and used the giant biker's own momentum to throw him over his shoulder. His back hit the ground as he landed a few feet away from the first guy, who still hadn't managed to find a way back to his feet yet.

He wasn't sure what Jason would've done next because after that a hand attached itself to the back of Jason's shirt and pulled him back into the densely packed mosh pit of fighting. He saw a flash of blond hair through the fighters and took a step forward but hit the ground again as the red haired biker tripped him up. He tried to roll away

again, but the biker had learned since the last time he'd knocked him on his ass. The biker didn't get back to his feet, instead he kept his hand locked around Percy's ankle and got to his knees. Uh oh.

If there's one thing Percy's learned from a lifetime of fighting people bigger than him, it's don't let them get on top of you. He knew he didn't have the strength required to throw this massive sack of muscle off of him if the guy managed to pin him to the ground, and not being on his feet made it hard for him to utilize his speed for evasion. It didn't stop him from trying, but it didn't do him much good.

After a brief struggle, during which they rolled too close to the first biker who had finally stood up, and knocked him to the ground again, the huge man ended up straddling Percy's waist, effectively rendering him prone.

The biker grabbed a fistfull of Percy's shirt and hauled his upper body a few inches off the ground, raising his other fist high above him, preparing to bring it down. Percy's left arm was trapped between his body and a large muscular thigh, but his right arm was free. He wouldn't be able to break this guy's grip with raw strength alone so he didn't even try. He caught a glimpse of shiny metal poking out from under the guy's leather jacket. At first he thought it was a gun but as his hand fumbled to undo the safety button on the holster, he realized it was actually a large bowie knife. He drew it and raised it back, planning to aim for the guy's upper arm and force him to let go. The biker's fist started to fall, heading straight for his face. Percy stabbed forward with the point of the blade.

"Fuck yeah, boss! Finish this little fag off so we can deal with the Acolytes and get outta here before the cops show up!"

The fist hurtling towards him stopped a few inches from his face. Confused, Percy halted his attack too, the point of the knife tearing a small hole in the leather.

The biker on top of him turned to look at the guy on the ground next to them, the one with the flattened nose. “What’d you say, Gary?” he asked him.

Gary gestured impatiently at Percy. “Hurry up with this so we can deal with the Acolytes! The police are probably on their way right now!” Gary tried to push himself off the ground but someone accidentally stomped on his fingers and he hollered, pulling his hand back and rolling closer to where Percy and the other biker were still entangled.

The biker on top of him blinked once and looked back at Percy, his eyes flicking down to the plain t-shirt gripped in his fist. “You’re not… an Acolyte?”

“Man, do I *look* like a gang member?!” Percy asked him sarcastically, gesturing with the knife at, well, all of him.

The biker apparently didn’t like his tone because he bared his teeth and shook him a little with the grip on his shirt. He didn’t seem to care about the wicked sharp knife Percy had. “Then what are you? Why are you here?!”

“I *was* going to get married. It’s not *my* fault your goon decided to pick a fight with us!”

If anything his answer made the biker appear more confused. He looked up into the fray of flying fists, his gaze zeroing in on Jason, who was currently pulling someone down and kneeing them in the stomach. The red haired guy looked back at Percy, then at Jason again. The hard edges of his face softened a bit, but not by much.

“What did they do?” the guy asked Gary.

“Well they were walking by, holding hands, and the shorter one kissed the taller one.” Gary explained while he tried to keep from getting kicked around some more.

“What *else* did they fuckin’ do, Gary?!” the guy spit out in Gary’s direction.

“What…what do you mean, boss? They was walkin’ through our territory being all gay and-”

“You started a fuckin’ war because they’re *gay?* Gary, you’re a *fuckin’ moron!* These guys are barely more than teenagers, and on their wedding night to boot? *What the fuck were you thinkin’?!”* the biker snarled at Gary, his hand releasing the front of Percy’s shirt and his raised fist coming down to clench by his side. Percy’s back hit the ground, but he simply lay there, just as confused as Gary looked to be. He probably could’ve shanked the guy and gotten him off him by now but he was honestly kind of curious as to what direction this confrontation seemed to be heading towards.

“What? Axel, they’re…but…they’re *gay.”* Gary said again, this time with more emphasis, as if this Axel dude hadn’t quite understood him the first time.

“So? *Who cares?!”* Axel shouted, his entire being radiating anger.

Gary swallowed hard, finally realizing that he’d done something wrong. “But just three days ago you broke Paulie’s hand…”

Axel looked at his gang member in disbelief. “I broke Paulie’s hand because he fuckin’ *shot me in the leg last year* , not becasue he married a dude!”

“I-”

“This was your first task as a full member, Gary, and you *fucked* it *up*. It was so easy, too! *Wait at the meeting spot and call me if the cops show up early*. What was so hard for you to understand about that? Instead, I roll up on you getting your ass handed to you by what I think are two Acolytes, so what is my first reaction? I jump in to save your sorry ass!” A small trail of blood started to make its way out of Axel’s broken nose and the biker angrily pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket and swiped at it, not even wincing when the broken cartilage audibly ground together. Percy did. His view from under the guy was not pleasant. Although hearing this dude tear into his friend kind of sweetened the situation a little bit.

Gary, now rubbing his recently kicked shin, said, “Boss, I’m sorry, I didn’t think you’d mind-”

“You’re goddamn right you didn’t think! Look around you, Gary. Look at this fuckin’ mess. You what? You didn’t think I’d mind that you just started a war with the same people we were tryin’ to make peace with? The Acolytes probably think we lured them here to ambush them! *Tell me how I’m supposed to fix this, Gary?”* Axel turned and spit a glob of blood out on the pavement a few inches away from them, stuffing his handkerchief back in his pocket.

Gary seemed to finally lose his temper at his boss. “Hey, this isn’t *all* my fault! They threw the first hit, alright!” he yelled, blood spraying off his lips from his smashed nose.

“Good, you probably deserved it, you little shit bag! You didn’t even

have the balls to hit first? My god! If I was there *I* would've hit you first!" Axel paused for a second, then said, "You know? That actually sounds like a good idea."

Gary looked up in confusion, but Percy saw what was coming. "What do you-"

Axel backhanded Gary across the face and Gary fell back with a cry of shock. Backhands weren't meant to hurt, they were meant to degrade and disrespect, so personally Percy thought the shocked yelp that Gary belted out was more than appropriate for the situation.

"I'll deal with you after I fix this fucking mess you got us into," Axel growled at Gary while he started the task of heaving himself up off Percy and the ground. Percy watched the red haired biker warily, the guy's knife still clutched in his hand. Axel stood up and moved one of his legs so he was standing next to Percy and not over him, and looked down. Axel extended a hand. "Sorry about that, friend. Seems we got off on the wrong foot. Name's Bloody Axel, but my friends just call me Axel." Percy took the offered hand and let the biker help him to his feet. In the background he watched someone take a fist to the jaw and go down hard. Axel smiled at Percy like they weren't standing in the middle of a mob. "I'm the leader of the Desert Riders and on behalf of all of us, I'd like to formally apologize for my member's behavior. I got no problem with you or your lifestyle."

Axel stuck his hand out again, this time for a hand shake now that they were both standing upright. Percy hesitantly shook it and handed the guy his knife back. "Uh, thanks, I guess. But is this really the time for this?" Percy asked, stepping to the side out of the way as two struggling figures next to them tripped over Gary and went to the ground.

Axel spread his arms to the side and laughed, "It's always a time to make friends, friend!" Percy kinda liked this guy, despite the physical altercation they'd just come out of.

Jason chose that moment to get jostled in between Percy and Axel, the guy he'd originally been fighting disappearing back into the fray. Jason righted his balance, looked at Axel, and swung.

"Jason, wait!" Percy shouted, and thankfully Jason had incredible reflexes and trusted Percy enough to halt an attack on a guy who'd until recently been the enemy, because his fist faltered and landed short, stopping before it met its target. Axel had taken a step back and raised a hand to catch the fist aimed at him.

Jason looked over his shoulder at Percy. "What?"

"Don't hit him, he's a good guy!"

"We're on *their* side now?!" Jason lowered his arm and gestured at Gary. "What about-"

"Fuck Gary," Axel said, coming out of his defensive position and offering Jason his hand. "I'm Axel, nice to meet you, kid."

"I'm so confused," Jason mumbled, staring at Axel's hand.

Percy came up to stand next to Jason, bumping him lightly with his shoulder. "I was too, don't worry. Axel's a friend now, though."

Jason stared at him for a second before rolling his eyes and shaking his head, taking Axel's hand and pumping it a few times. "You make the weirdest fucking friends, Percy."

“Don’t I know it.” Percy laughed.

Jason ran a hand through his hair and took a deep breath, trying to even out his heaving chest, still worked up from all the fighting. “So what happens now?” he asked.

Axel scratched his beard and looked around. “Well, it was never supposed to come to a fight, but now that it’s here we’ve got to finish it.”

“Well can’t you just explain to the other guys that it was all a misunderstanding?” Percy asked him.

Axel shook his head and laughed, “No way, not now, it’s gone too far. Look around you, these guys are in full fight mode and half of them are probably drunk. The cops’ll be rollin’ up here soon, no doubt, we just gotta hold our own till the Acolytes scatter and then we’ll get out of here too.” Axel looked at him and Jason. “You two might as well get out of here now, this really has nothing to do with you.”

Jason and him shared a look.

“I think we’ll stick around and help, if it’s alright with you,” Percy said.

Axel raised his eyebrows and nodded impressively. “I won’t say no to that, but weren’t you two on your way to get married? I don’t wanna hold you up or anything.”

Jason shrugged. “Haven’t even picked the place yet, so it’s not a time sensitive thing. Besides, what’s a wedding night without a little excitement?”

Axel laughed again and clapped Jason on the shoulder. “I like you two! Well alright, if you insist, then. You see those guys with the bleeding hearts on their jackets? Those are the Acolytes. Any one of them comes near you, you lay ‘em out flat, got it?”

A hand appeared on Axel’s arm and a second later Gary poked his head around the massive biker, having found his way to his feet again. “Boss, let me fight, I can do it, I swear! I’m better than these little f-”

Axel shook Gary’s hand off his arm and brought his elbow back hard into Gary’s face. The blond biker went to his knees, holding his nose again, groaning.

“I said I’d deal with you *after,* Gary! Stay the *fuck down!”* Axel snarled at him.

“Hey! Axel! You got a lot of nerve pullin’ somethin’ like this!” A new voice yelled.

Percy, Jason, and Axel turned towards the shout. Three *Acolytes* stood facing them, the middle one clearly holding some form of leadership...and a baseball bat. Percy guessed he was Axel's equivalent in the other gang.

Axel didn’t even try to deny the guy’s claims, he just spat another glob of blood, sighed, and shifted into a fighting stance. Percy and Jason mutely flanked his sides, backing him up, anticipating a fight. The three *Acolytes* charged.

Thalia

Chapter Notes

oh gosh, I've been gone for a while. I explain a little bit why in the end notes, but for now I hope you enjoy this chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Flashback-Streets of Vegas-

Percy's POV

The rest of the fighting was pretty much a blur for Percy, just a series of leather jackets and fists, the only constant being Jason and Axel right beside him. It's funny how some good old fashioned brawling brings people together. Percy was really starting to like this Axel guy. He was considering inviting him to the wedding.

Over the din of shouting and scuffling, Percy heard Axel say something about them running out of time, that the police wouldn't be far behind. He assumed that meant they should be wrapping this business up as quickly as they could. Good thing the bikers seemed to be dropping like flies left and right. The only problem was that it wasn't only the *Acolytes* that were going down. He caught sight of who he'd come to learn was Axel's second in command seemingly lose his footing and be tossed to the ground, but due to either the alcohol singing in his veins or the chaos of the fighting, whatever it was that took him down was a quick flash of black and gray to Percy.

"Percy!" He turned at the sound of Jason calling his name. When Jason saw he had his attention, he pointed to his left and yelled, "Percy, it's *Thalia!"*

He followed the line of Jason's indication in surprise just in time to

see Thalia, because it was indeed her, there was no mistaking that black choppy hair and piercings, bodily throw a biker into the side of a street lamp and kick them in the stomach. A split second later, she was gone again, ducking under legs and arms to disappear into the fighting.

Percy made his way over to Jason as Axel backed up to meet them, having heard the shout.

“How is that possible!? I thought she was still in South America!” Percy told Jason, raising his voice in order to be heard over the pandemonium.

“No clue! How’d she even find-Thalia no, wait!”

Percy felt a whoosh of air and then a leg was being swept across the ground by his feet, missing him by inches but catching Axel’s ankles dead on. A small pale hand darted out and caught the big biker’s wrist and the next moment he was being slammed onto the pavement on his back by a hard shove aimed at his chest by Thalia’s other hand. Percy could’ve swore he felt the ground shudder as Axel landed and his breath whooshed out of his lungs.

Before Thalia could spin away, or worse keep attacking their new friend, Percy grabbed ahold of her arm and was able to lock her in a prone position long enough for them to talk to her.

“He’s a friend! He’s a friend, Thalia, calm down.” Percy said as Jason reached down to give Axel a hand up.

“Sorry, Axel. That’s my sister, Thalia.” Jason apologized as the biker took his hand.

Axel wheezed on the ground a second before saying, “I can see the family resemblance,” and hauling himself back to his feet.

Jason laughed self-consciously and helped brush debris off Axel’s leather jacket. Thalia shot a confused look over her shoulder at Percy and struggled against his hold until he released her.

“What have you two gotten yourselves into now?” Were the first words out of her mouth. Percy thought that was a fair question. He also thought it was one they got asked a lot.

“Just a little friendly misunderstanding,” he told her, running his tongue over his teeth, tasting the sharp tang of blood.

She gave him a skeptical eyebrow raise and waited for a better explanation.

Jason stepped around Axel to stand next to Percy, absently rubbing the back of his neck as he did so. “Long story short?” he said to her, “we were in the wrong place at the right time. Short story long? We stumbled upon some bikers and accidentally started a turf war between them that we’re helping to clean up. We made a few friends along the way.” Jason paused to point at the biker patches on Axel’s jacket. “The guys wearing similar ones are the good guys…probably,” he added with a quick sideways look at Axel. The biker just winked at him. “Anyways, what are *you* doing here? How’d you even find us?”

Thalia pursed her lips and looked around at the few scuffling brawls that were still going on before turning back to them. She straightened her jacket and said, “I’m tracking a m-... a someone. It led me near here and I happened to hear your voices from the next alley over. I wasn’t really sure who the…*person*,” Thalia corrected herself again,

cautious of Axel's mortal status, "was yet, but I knew he was familiar. Now that I've run into you two doofuses, I have a pretty good idea as to who it is." Thalia ended her sentence with a stare that bore so hard into the side of Percy's head he was worried she'd singe the hair there. She was obviously trying to tell him something.

Too bad he had no clue what that was.

He stared back at her until she finally got annoyed and looked on the verge of rolling her eyes at him. Thalia grabbed a handful of his shirt and yanked him down to her level. In the back of his mind he wondered when he'd gotten so much taller than her. He remembered a time when she had a good few inches on him. Ignoring the fact that Thalia was frozen at age fifteen for the rest of her life, it made him feel good knowing that he was taller than at least one of the Grace siblings.

She pressed a piece of cloth into his hand and hissed, "He's an *old friend,"* into his ear.

Jason gave them an odd look and Percy returned it, just as confused. Thalia released him and he drew back, looking down at the scrap of cloth she'd given him. It was a section of torn elastic waistband that had to have come from probably the largest pair of tighty whities he'd ever seen.

His surprise must have shown on his face, because Jason asked, "What is it? Is it bad?"

Thalia looked at Percy and nodded in confirmation when he raised his eyebrows at her.

Percy lifted the cloth up and showed it to Jason, who stared at it

blankly. “That literally means nothing to me.”

Percy rolled his eyes and handed the Minotaur's underwear scrap back to Thalia. He leaned over and whispered, “She’s tracking the Minotaur. Whenever he rematerializes he comes to find me. It’s not a big deal, I doubt he’ll find us in the city, he’s dumb as rocks.” He pulled back just enough to see Jason’s face.

Jason eyed him up for a second, probably weighing the level of danger he thought they might be in. Finally, he shrugged and said, “Okay.”

“Okay?” Percy asked. He thought Jason would put up more of a fuss, be more worried about the imminent threat of a high level monster possibly tracking them down with the intent to kill them.

Jason smiled at him. “Okay. I trust you. If you say it’s not a big deal, I believe you.”

Percy was strangely touched by that. He couldn’t help giving him a soft smile back. They watched each other for a second before Jason leaned in and gave him a kiss.

Thalia’s choked coughing reminded Percy that she had absolutely no idea about this new development. They broke apart and turned back to her. Axel gave her a pat on the back while she coughed again.

Thalia cleared her throat, brushing her fringe back off her forehead, her eyes wide. “I’m sorry, but are my eyes failing me or did I see what I think I just saw,” she said, pointing between the two of them.

Axel gasped and rounded on Jason. “You haven’t even told your sister you're getting married yet?” He asked.

“ *Getting married?!”* Thalia demanded. Her wide eyes narrowed suddenly and then she was burning a hole into the side of Percy’s head for another reason entirely. “Where’s Annabeth?”

“Uh, back at camp. This is kind of a guy’s tr-”

“Piper?”

“With her, but don’t worry, they-”

Thalia huffed and Percy quieted down. She tapped her foot a few times, fiddled with a few of her piercings, zipped and unzipped her parka before crossing her arms and settling down. “Okay, so tell me everything. I don’t want to just assume something and be wrong, so before that happens you’d better clear this up.”

Someone got sucker punched a few feet behind her, but she didn’t even flinch.

Him and Jason glanced at each other, shrugged, and then told her the story. They told her how they weren’t together with the girls anymore, that he and Jason had decided to get married while they were in Vegas. Jason’s hand slipped into his as they talked and he linked their fingers together. Thalia’s eyebrows went further and further up as they outlined the night’s activities for her, her eyes flicking down when they held hands.

When they were done, she laughed. It wasn’t a mean laugh, it sounded

genuine and…happy for them.

“Wow, okay…alright. I didn’t expect this, but it doesn’t really surprise me.”

“It doesn’t?” Jason asked.

Thalia cracked a smile and then did something very out of character for her. She rushed forwards and hugged them both at the same time, squeezing hard with her short arms. “You look happy,” she mumbled from where her face was buried in their shirts, “you always look happy with each other.” Thalia ended the hug and stepped back. “As long as no one’s getting hurt by this, I don’t see a problem. You’ll have to tell me how things ended with the girls eventually, but right now I think we have some more pressing issues.” She nodded with her chin towards the alley, bringing the oncoming flashing blue and red lights to their attention.

Axel turned his head and shouted something at his second in command, who pushed the guy he was fighting away from him and gave a long, sharp whistle. All of a sudden the parking lot was roaring with the sound of Harleys being revved up as the bikers abandoned the brawl and sped out of sight. Axel looked at the flashing lights as the sound of the police siren finally reached them. The big biker cracked his knuckles and said, “Come on lads, we gotta cheese it before the five-oh shows up. One of my boys’ll take my ride, I’ll hoof it on foot with you for a while.”

“You sure, Axel? I don’t want to impose on you or anything.” Percy asked.

The big guy patted him on the back. “Impose? Nah, little friend. This is the most excitement I’ve had in a while! I’m gonna buy you two a drink in celebration of your wedding.”

Percy opened his mouth to say something but Jason was faster. “Why don’t you come?”

“Come where?”

“The wedding,” Jason clarified. “We’d love to have you.”

Axel sniffled and wiped his nose, but Percy couldn’t tell if he was getting emotional or if it was because Percy had broken his nose about fifteen minutes ago. “Well…I’d love to be there. Count me in!”

“You’ll be there too right, Thalia?” Jason asked her. “You don’t have to leave right away, right?” To anyone else it probably sounded like an offhand question, but Percy knew Jason well enough to hear the longing in his voice. To Jason, Thalia was the only family he had left. He wanted her there more than anything. He didn’t get to see her very often.

“Of course I’m going to be there, you’re my brother! I wouldn’t miss it for anything. The, uh, tracking will be fine without me, the others are still out there, they can handle it.” If Axel thought a fifteen year old girl talking about tracking another human being down was strange, he didn’t say anything. But then again, he had apparently broken some guy’s hand for shooting him in the leg so maybe this was just another Friday conversation for him.

Jason pulled her in for a quick one-armed hug. “Thanks, sis.” The relief and happiness in his voice was palpable.

Thallia cuffed him lightly on arm. “Alright, there’s time to be sappy later. Let’s quit wasting time, and get out of here.”

“Oh! Just one more thing before we leave,” Axel said, fishing around in the pockets of his jacket. He pulled out a sleek black cellphone and crouched down, waving them over. “Quick, before the cherries and berries get here.” Him and Jason didn’t even hesitate before sidling up to him. Axel tossed up a rock-on hand sign and gestured for them to do the same. The biker held his phone out for a picture and Percy gave the camera a wide smile. He could practically hear Thalia rolling her eyes in exasperation at them.

After he snapped the photo, Axel took the lead and started running, the others close behind him. As Percy turned the corner out of the parking lot, he gave one glance back just in time to see Gary get slapped in a pair of handcuffs.

They spent the next hour and a half following Axel around the neon lit streets of Vegas, just chatting and getting to know each other. Thalia left them for about fifteen minutes to go meet up with one of the other Hunters, but she eventually met up with them again.

“So, yeah, we’ve pretty much got everything figured out except for the place,” Percy explained to Thalia as they walked.

“I could probably help with that,” Axel said. “My wife’s cousin owns a little chapel not a few streets from where we're at now. They’re nice people and the place they’ve got isn’t corny and frilly like the others you’ll find on the Strip. He’s a certified marriage officiant too, so you don’t have to find one along the way. I’ll call in a favor, he won’t charge you nothing at all.”

“Well we don’t mind paying them, you don’t have to do that much for us,” Jason protested. Percy agreed, they did just win thousands of dollars at a casino after all.

Axel blew a raspberry and waved a hand, dismissing his protest. “Nah, don’t you two worry about it. It’d be an honor.”

“Well, if you insist-”

“I do! So quit your bitching and look at this lovely building!” Axel came to a stop and spread his arms out, facing a building that Percy just knew right off the bat would have Jason’s full attention. It was one of those Notre Dame looking buildings, with all the fancy holes cut into the edges of the window sills. Sure enough, when he checked, Jason’s eyes were filled with wonder and excitement, his lips moving silently as he took in the architecture. Percy watched him for a minute, a warm feeling blooming in his chest.

Thalia cleared her throat and they all looked at her. She chewed her lip. “This is a nice place but it looks a little…religious…” She said cautiously. “Are you sure they’d be okay with my brother and Percy getting married here, considering the fact that they-”

“They’re gay?” Axel finished for her. He pointed to a sign out front. “You see that? Mae ‘na groeso i bawb? Means ‘all are welcome’, and by all, I mean *all.* You’ve got nothing to worry about. Now come on, let’s go inside and reserve a room. You’ll love it in there, it’s just as impressive as the outside.”

With that, Axel waved them to follow him and started up the steps. Jason took Percy’s hand again and gave him a sweet smile.

Chapter End Notes

> Wow, it's been a while. Sorry about that. I won't take forever explaining why, I'll just make it short. I just recently ended my relationship with a partner I'd had for six years, so understandably there was a lot of stuff to get done while separating. This resulted in me having to move for the second time in less than six months, which resulted in my writing being

put on the back burner.

But I'm settled in and much happier, so I'll be able to pick up my writing more frequently now. Thanks for sticking with me this long. On bad days I go back and reread some of your comments and it really does turn my mood around.

...eeeep...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Leo's POV

As soon as Percy and Jason passed out and went into the memory, Grover beckoned everyone over to him.

"Okay so here's the thing: last night Leo and I went to check up on Percy and Jason, and guess what? They were together. Or at least Percy wasn't in his room and Jason was acting weird when we talked to him." Grover said. "Percy had his side of the empathy link closed so I couldn't tell exactly where he was, but he never left the residential hall, so where else would he be?"

"Yeah, I think we interrupted them talking or something, Jason sounded pretty irritated." Leo said.

"Well according to what Percy said, he was in his room all night." Will chimed in. "Said he hadn't seen Jason for a bit, actually. I ran into him when he was heading back to the bathrooms."

Grover and Leo shook their heads in unison, and Grover said, "Nope, I *know* he was lying because I actually checked his room while Leo was talking to Jason. I opened the door right before Jason told us Percy was sleeping."

“And unless Percy turns invisible when he sleeps, there was no one in his room.” Leo added.

“Don’t worry, I didn’t believe him,” Will explained, “he kinda snapped at me, got all defensive when I asked about Jason, then tried to scurry off as fast as he could. It was super weird.”

Frank leaned forward and rested his elbows and forearms on the table, his fingers idly drumming on the wood. “Well *something* obviously happened last night. You guys saw the way they were just acting. They could barely even *look* at each other, let alone be in the same room for more than a few seconds. We practically had to tie them to their chairs just to keep them here long enough to open the album and get to a new page.” Frank’s annoyance was apparent, and Leo couldn’t really blame him. Being around Percy and Jason right now was almost as bad as being around them when they first met, except this time they all knew each other better so it felt more personal than watching two powerful demigods passive aggressively vying for the alpha position. Now it was just awkward instead of tense, you couldn’t help but feel bad for them, despite the fact that they’d gotten themselves into this mess.

Coach Hedge cleared his throat and shuffled on his feet a bit before mumbling, “I don’t have to like it, but most of you kids aren’t kids anymore and I can’t really do a lot to stop your, uh, *nightly proclivities.* This isn’t sixteen year old Percy and Annabeth sneaking off to the stables in the middle of the night, these are two adults capable of making adult dec-”

“Woah, woah, woah! I-I wasn’t implying that *that’s* what happened!” Frank sputtered out, his face turning an alarming shade of red.

“ *I’m* implying that that’s what happened,” Will piped up, shrugging his shoulders. “You don’t get hickeys from just talking.”

Grover's eyes widened considerably. "No! No that's *not* what happened. Come on, guys, they're responsible adults, they *know* they need to talk about this and that's exactly what they-"

Nico snorted and talked over Grover, cutting him off. "They totally fucked." Coach Hedge wrinkled his nose at the phrasing.

Leo crossed his arms and stood his ground next to Grover. "Have some faith in them. Not everything is about-"

"The sex they definitely had last night?" Will interjected. "Midnight showers, the sudden need to do laundry? Not to mention how awkward they're being this morning. It all adds up pretty clearly."

"Those don't explicitly mean that they-"

"-guys, please, this is *their* personal business, we shouldn't be talking about that stuff!" Frank cut in loudly.

"If lobsters could talk, I swear to the gods this would be so much easier," Will muttered to himself.

"Alright, that's enough," Hedge said impatiently, "I didn't mean to start a-"

"Wait what did you just say, Will?" Grover called, but over the din of the rest of the group, his voice was drowned out.

"-inappropriate. I was just making a quick point, we should drop the

subject," Hedge, now starting to look uncomfortable, continued.

Nico put his hands up in surrender, leaning back in his chair. "That's fine, I was just-"

"Okay, stop!" Grover shouted. Thankfully this time it worked and everyone quieted down. Grover turned to Will and pointed at him. "Will. What was that you said about Guido?"

Will raised an eyebrow, like he'd already forgotten he'd said anything about it. "What, Percy's lobster? I was just joking that if he could talk, he would probably know a lot about what happened. Not just the sex stuff, but maybe he heard them talking too. When I ran into Percy in the hallway, he was heading back to the bathroom to leave the lobster there. It's still in the sink. His little eyes kinda freak me out. It's hard to pee when he's watching you."

A light bulb clicked on in Leo's head. Lobster's couldn't talk, but Grover-

"-can speak lobster! *I* can speak lobster. What bathroom is he in?" Grover asked, suddenly a lot more animated than he had been a minute ago.

Will sat forward immediately, and Leo could see the interests of the others peak as well. "He's in the one at the bottom of the stairs on the far end of the bedroom hallway. Guido looked pretty pissed off at being kicked out too, I bet he'd love to have someone to talk to about it."

Leo put a hand on Grover's back and pushed him into a standing position. "Go, Grover, hurry! Before they wake up! Guido was with them on the Vegas night, he might know how all this started!"

Grover didn't waste any more time, and it wasn't long before his hoof beats could barely be heard.

The excitement in the room was palpable, the truth of everything being so close at hand was putting everyone in high spirits. Leo wasn't sure how long Grover would be gone talking to Guido, but it was long enough for Leo and the others to fall back into idle conversation. Nothing as controversial as before, thankfully.

"Oh, Leo," Will said, turning to get his attention. "By the way, I told Jason you needed him to help you with something today. Sorry about that, it was just the first excuse that came to mind."

Leo waved it off. "Don't worry about it, I'll make something up. There's always stuff to do around here." Will nodded his thanks and went back to whatever he was talking about with Frank. Leo couldn't hear everything they were saying, but then again he wasn't really paying attention. Little snippets of their conversation filtered through though.

"-my grandma's. Yeah, she actually loved it-but she-very strict-know?"

"Loved?" Will asked gently. Leo tuned in a little better. It was rare for Frank to talk about his grandmother with someone he wasn't extremely close with.

Frank smiled and nodded as his eyes traced the path his fingers took over his new tattoo. "She passed away during the Giant War. She always wanted me to be more involved with my heritage. She never really said it, but you'd get the kinda vibe that she was one of those people who were prudish about stuff like tattoos. I thought that for a long time too, but the last time I saw her I noticed she had one. It was

exactly like this one, except it was much smaller. It was on her ankle. Just a tiny little dragon."

Leo remembered Frank telling him a little about this last night when they were deciding what they wanted to get. Frank had actually suggested the phoenix for Leo. He said the legend of the bird reminded him a lot of Leo, and that had been encouragement enough for him to decide on that design. When Leo had seen Frank's dragon design, the big guy had explained the meaning to him a bit.

Leo thought the Apollo legacy triplets that had tattooed them in Vegas captured the emotion behind this design very well. Plus it was nice that Will got to meet some of his distant relatives in such an unexpected place. Those three certainly hadn't looked like they belonged in a biker gang, but Axel had treated them like family so they'd obviously been there a long time. It's too bad they-

"They're waking up!" Nico sat forward in his chair so abruptly he almost toppled out of it. Next to him, Jason was stirring. "Oh crap, why are they waking up so soon? They were out longer the last two times."

"Shit, Grover's not back yet," Leo said, shooting to his feet.

A small, strong hand landed on his shoulder and he nearly jumped out of his skin. Coach Hedge turned him around and gripped him by both shoulders. "Listen up, Valdez. Have you thought up a way to stall this trip home yet?"

To be honest, Leo hadn't given it much thought, but how hard could it be? "Yes," he lied.

"Great, go do that, hopefully it'll distract those two long enough for

Grover to get back."

"Uh," He looked around at everyone looking at him, counting on him. "You got it, boss." Leo said before rushing out of the dining room.

Think, think, think! He chanted to himself as he ran down the corridors. He needed to find a way to stall both this trip home, and Percy and Jason right now.

Leo's feet skidded to a halt as his heart did a sad little flip in his chest. He stared at the engine room door in front of him and hesitated for just a second before disengaging the lock and flying down the stairs.

I'm sorry, buddy, he mentally apologized.

As if he could read his thoughts, Festus' creaky voice came out of the speaker at the bottom of the stairs. His creaks and groans tilted up at the end in a clear question: *what's going on, friend? All systems are running at top performance. Have I missed something?*

Leo clenched his jaw and said through his teeth, "Nope, just a little… routine maintenance," as he fiddled with the hatch on the floor.

There was a short pause and then Festus let out a small *eeeeerrreek?*

Leo finally got the hatch unlocked and hauled up on its hinges, the enormous thing almost too heavy for him to lift. He barely used this hatch and only installed it in the off chance that someone other than him and bigger than him had to work down here and couldn't fit through his Leo-sized tunnels that ran through the entirety of the ship.

He looked down into the hole that led to the thousands and thousands of gears and pistons that were whirring and spinning, keeping the main flight and propulsion functions of the ship running. The huge steel pipe wrench clenched in his hand felt like an executioner's axe.

"...yeah." Leo finally answered his dragon.

Creee…scriii eereeeeek?

"Yes, I can fix you. I just…have to make it so it's not so easy for me. I gotta buy us some time. And if it's something simple, then I won't be able to hold myself back, I'll want to fix you as quickly as I can."

…. *eeeep…*

The mournful little peep was almost too much for Leo. Of course Festus forgave him, of course he trusted Leo to fix him after.

"Thanks, buddy."

There was no more response from the bronze dragon, but Leo could practically feel the entire ship tense up, as if bracing itself for what he was about to do to it.

Leo murmured one last, " *I'm sorry,"* before the wrench that was almost as tall as he was went tumbling down into the perfectly healthy mechanisms. The tears that went with it vaporized before they even touched the engine.

-Back to the Present-Argo *II*-

Jason's POV

The first thing Jason noticed as he came back from the memory was the heavy silence in the room. The second thing he noticed was Percy's sleep-soft eyes staring at him. Jason looked away quickly.

The air was thick with tension. It made his hands feel clammy because it reminded him of the atmosphere in his room last night after things had gone so terribly wrong.

He instinctively looked for his best friend but Leo was nowhere to be found, and Grover was noticeably absent as well. He opened his mouth to ask where they'd gone, but the sudden tinkling of the glass cups in the cabinet made him close it again.

Across the table, Percy said "What-"

And then several things happened at once.

Grover came rushing into the dining room, his upper half soaking wet.

Leo burst through the other entrance to the room. Through sniffles and tears, Leo cried, "There's something wrong with Festus!"

Then, an enormous explosion thundered from underneath them and

the ship listed to the side alarmingly. Everyone panicked and grabbed a hold of the nearest thing that was bolted into the floor while everything else flew off the counter tops and onto the floor. Jason felt the ship drop several hundred feet in altitude. Even *his* stomach churned at the feeling, but poor Percy looked absolutely on the brink of a heart attack. Someone screamed.

"T-There's-there's s-something wrong with Festus!" Leo cried again, right before thick black smoke started billowing up from between the floorboards.

Chapter End Notes

> Thank you all for your well wishes,they meant a lot to me. I was the one that initiated the break up so just know that I am so much happier now ❤

That Should Stall It

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Jason's POV

Someone bumped into him but the smoke was so thick he couldn't make out who, although judging by the panicked breathing and tight grip on his arm, he had a pretty good idea of who it was. How Percy made it around the table so fast was beyond him, but he didn't dwell on it too much on account of the much more immediate threat of them all dropping out of the sky in a couple thousand pound metal boat.

One of the hands clutching his arm left and then there was the very distinct sound of Percy's pen springing into sword form.

"Jason, the windows! The windows!" Percy said loudly, trying to be heard over the screaming and awful groaning and creaking the ship was doing. "Open the-" he broke off into a coughing fit, gasping for air in the dense cloud of smoke.

The windows? How did Percy expect him to be able to find them if he couldn't even see a few inches in front of- oh. It dawned on him what Percy meant. He only hoped Leo would forgive him, because Jason wasn't sure if he could do this without busting every window in the ship.

First he tried to push the air outwards, attempting to throw open the

windows from the inside, but as Festus started to list more to the side the air pressure increased and rendered the windows practically glued shut. Although with the slight air disturbance he caused inside the ship he was able to make out a few shapes around the room as the smoke was carried about. Next to him, Percy swinted up at him, one hand locked around Jason's arm, the other on Riptide's hilt. He had the point of his sword driven down deep into the floorboards, using it to anchor them both.

"Close your eyes!" Jason told him.

"-at?" At? Oh. he was trying to say *what.*

"I said 'close your eyes'. I have to break the windows!"

Percy just shook his head at him, indicating that he still couldn't hear him.

"Close your- oh fuck, nevermind, just-" Jason gave up on trying to communicate and pulled Percy closer, pressing his face into his chest, tucking his head under his chin. He expected Percy to react in confusion, but instead he felt both his arms come up and wrap around him. He was shaking, minutely, but Jason could feel the tremors rocking through him, could feel the pounding of Percy's heart thudding against his own chest.

He hoped the others would be alright, but it wasn't like he could warn them what was about to happen. The creaking and groaning of the ship was now accompanied by Festus' voice coming over the loudspeakers, probably in the middle of giving Leo a status report. If Leo replied, Jason didn't hear it.

Another thundering boom rocked the ship beneath them and more

smoke seeped up through the floor, this time carrying the oily scent of engine grease. What the hell was happening down there?

Percy gave another shudder and Jason held him tighter, hunching over him as best he could.

"Hold on," he murmured, certain that he couldn't hear him but wanting to say it nonetheless.

Jason focused on the air currents hugging the giant ship as it fell through the sky. He singled out the strongest of them that was pushing up against the windows of the dining room and instead of trying to push the windows outwards this time, he *pulled* the wind in, against them. They gave off no sound and didn't break. Whatever Leo had made them from, it certainly wasn't normal glass. He pulled on the current stronger, slamming it up against the side again, cracking it like a giant whip.

The sheer amount of force that hit the ship caused it to rock back upright for just a split second before the windows finally gave in. Thankfully whatever glass they had been made of didn't splinter into a million pieces, which would *not* have been fun to be pelted with. Instead they shattered into a few big pieces that he was able to fling against the inside wall of the dining room so they didn't slice up everyone in here. Unfortunately the otherside of the room was where the floor length TV screens were mounted. The window glass embedded itself deep into the screens, cracking them beyond repair. Oops. Well, he'd take that over the other option.

This all happened in a split second, and in that split second the cabin depressurized. Even he wasn't immune to the effects of the sudden change. His ears popped horribly, painfully, and his breath got knocked out of his lungs, the same as everyone else. Percy didn't make a noise as it happened, but he flinched violently when the windows broke. Other than that he gave no indication of how he was doing. Jason pushed the worry down and tried to deal with the other

complications that came from his actions.

The smoke did get sucked out of the cabin almost instantaneously, so he could see that everyone was fine. Well, as fine as one can be considering the circumstances. Most of them were holding onto sturdy fixtures, or in Grover's case scrambling into an empty cupboard. Leo was latched onto the door frame and was mouthing soundless words at the loudspeaker. The noise in the ship had escalated tenfold after Jason had broken the windows, the wind whipping violently about, whistling and screeching as it poured into the ship. Luckily he was pretty sure the dining room windows were the only ones he'd broken.

The new change in wind current directions caused the ship to tilt upright, so at least they weren't falling sideways any more. That was a plus.

The lights flickered once, twice, and Jason thought they were about to lose power entirely, but then they evened out and shone brightly. Seems like Festus was trying to internally divert power to the basic necessities. Jason wished he'd hurry up with the emergency back up flight generators… if they weren't broken as well by whatever it was that had caused the explosion before.

Since the ship wasn't tilted anymore they were able to stand upright without much trouble, but Percy was still clinging to him with strength akin to a Laestrygonian giant, so for the moment they were still huddled on the floor, bracing against the leg of the table. He felt Percy take a couple deep breaths and then he was detangling himself from Jason and standing up with a determination that in no way matched his earlier actions. He didn't bother asking him where he was going, the background noise too loud for anything else to be heard, but he figured he'd find out soon enough because Percy reached back down and pulled him up by the hand. He didn't let go or even look at him, just unstuck his sword from the floorboards and started the arduous task of walking towards Leo. Their wedding rings clinked together and Percy looked back and down at their joined hands for just a brief moment before tugging Jason after him across the room.

When they finally got to Leo, Percy sidled up to him and yanked Jason up next to him. Leo diverted his attention from the portable ship controller and looked up at them both. His eyes were red rimmed and puffy. Jason’s heart sank for his best friend.

Percy leaned down.

"-being attacked?!" Was all Jason could make out over the howling wind.

Leo did a quick look over his shoulder back down the way he had come and replied to Percy, but whatever he had said got lost in the ambient noise.

Percy once again yelled, "Are we being attacked?!"

Leo’s face scrunched up in confusion and this time Jason heard him when he said, "I really don't think this is the best time for a snack, Percy!" as he waved the controller around for emphasis.

If Percy hadn't been holding Riptide in one hand and Jason’s hand in the other, he was sure he would've face palmed. The exaggerated eye roll got the message across just fine though. As did the cutting motions he did with his sword through the air in front of him before pointing it down the hallway behind Leo.

Leo’s eyes widened and he shook his head vigorously, bodily putting himself in the doorway so they couldn't pass. He still couldn’t fully hear Leo’s voice, but his lips mouthed out "Just a malfunction!"

"Malfunction?!" Jason screamed in disbelief. "What the hell malfunctioned, the fucking explosives hold?!"

Leo wrung his hands around the controller before finally lifting one shoulder as a kind of *I dunno?*

The ship gave another shudder and over the howling of the wind a horrific metal-grinding-on-metal screech resonated up from below. Percy's grip on his hand tightened, but Jason didn't shake him off even though his fingers started to go numb. Percy wasn't afraid of much, but heights were pretty much on top of his 'Fuck This' list. Right now he was probably experiencing a living nightmare. The fact that Percy had dragged them up from the floor, ready and willing to go galavanting through this falling ship and fight whatever airborne monster had decided to attack them spoke volumes about his courage.

Festus spoke through the speaker again, and while Jason didn't understand the complicated language the bronze dragon used, he had no trouble detecting the urgency in his voice. Leo's head whipped up to look at the speaker and in a momentary lull in the overall chaotic cacophony he heard him say, " *What!* What do you *mean* the backup engines aren't responding?! They're nowhere *near* the- *fuck!* Festus, switch all flight and navigation functions to manual control!"

Percy stuck his sword into the floor again and rested his now free hand on Leo's shoulder, shaking him lightly. "Leo what the fuck is going on?! The backup functions aren't working?!"

Leo shook Percy's hand off without comment, his whole attention focused on the controller in his hand. He hurriedly turned it over to expose the back of it and started scrambling at the battery pack cover, trying to get it off.

"Leo, I don't it's dead batteries that are the prob-"

Leo ignored Jason as well and finally managed to take the cover off. Underneath it weren't batteries at all, but a single red button. The kind you'd see in cartoons that read 'SELF DESTRUCT'. He was relieved to see that this one only said 'Emergency'. Kind of a broad term, but if it got the job done, he wouldn't complain.

Leo waited until Festus creaked at him again before confidently slamming his finger down on the button.

Nothing happened.

Leo’s smile faltered and he pressed it again. Still nothing.

Jason could tell he was getting panicky now because he repeatedly pressed the button as fast as he could.

Jason idly wondered how long it would take him and Frank to fly everyone out of the ship before they pancaked in the middle of the Utah desert. Their altitude was dropping fast. Faster than he liked.

On about the thirtieth button smash, the lights flickered, went out once, and stayed off until Leo pressed the button again. They slowly turned back on. Leo’s eyes were wide and he refrained from hitting the button again.

" *That’s not supposed to happen* ." He hissed. "Festus, what's going on back-"

The dragon cut him off and creaked something at him.

Leo nodded and pressed the button, once again to no avail, but at least this time the lights didn't go out.

All of a sudden Percy was turning towards Jason, his sword forgotten, still stuck in the floor behind him. Percy looked at him with all the confidence of a soaking wet chihuahua.

"Can you do something?"

Jason swallowed hard. "Other than fly us out one by one? Not really."

Percy grabbed him by the shoulders, pulling him down a bit. In a low voice barely detectable over the other sounds, he said, "There's no water beneath us. I can't do anything to break our fall, Jason if Festus hits the ground he *will* be destroyed. That would crush Leo, he'd have to rebuild him all over again."

"Percy we're all going to be crushed unless we start evacuating this meteorite. I don't know what else to tell you. Breaking the windows was one thing, but floating this ship itself? I can't *do* that. There's no real air spirits around us, it's all just regular…air. I can move it a little bit, here and there, use it to fly, but to-to *hold* this thing up… The *Argo II* weighs hundreds of thousands of pounds… I'm sorry. I'm not that strong…"

Percy nodded as his gaze drifted off over Jason's shoulder in a thousand-yard-stare, his hands slowly losing their grip. His eyes kind of just-clouded over. Not physically of course, but in the kind of way people having flashbacks did. Almost to himself, Percy muttered, "We're falling and there's no water under us. No river." And then, even quieter, so quiet Jason almost didn't catch it, " *I can't fall…not again…"*

Jason shook him gently, trying to get his attention. “Hey, hey. Percy, hey. It’s alright, no one’s going to die. It’s going to be okay. This isn’t…it’s not like in Rome. No one’s going down *there.”*

Percy blinked a few times and nodded once, jerkily.

Jason sighed. “Okay, I can try. I’ll try it, but no promises. If this doesn’t work, we’re all getting out of here. Hey. *Hey.* I need you to look at me, alright? Do you understand?”

Percy’s eyes snapped back to his and it looked like he was maybe half aware of what was going on, but that was better than how he was a few seconds ago. He nodded and Percy nodded back, letting go of his shoulders to pick up his sword in shaky hands and cap it, putting the pen back in his pocket. He latched onto the other side of Leo’s door frame.

Leo, alerted by their separation, diverted his focus from the red button of uselessness and sent a questioning look at Jason's direction. He didn’t bother talking, he didn’t have the time, but he saw Percy whack Leo’s arm and point to the doorframe. Leo grabbed it and looked on in confusion. Jason got down on his knees, flattening his palms to the floor. The position probably wasn’t necessary but he wasn’t entirely sure he wouldn’t pass out momentarily from the exertion he knew was about to hit him like a tidal wave.

He took a brief second to scan the room, ensuring that everyone was at least partially secured to some stationary object before inhaling a few deep breaths. Jason opened up his senses fully to the air caressing the ship as they plummeted. He didn’t single out one or even a few of the swirling currents, but *all* of them. As far as he could reach. It was…disorienting to say the least. Nauseating, even. He was being truthful when he’d told Percy there were no *real* air spirits for him to command up here. There was no rhyme or reason, no consciousness

attached to the winds buffeting them. Instead, what he found were *fragments* of spirits, like there was at one time some form of order here but the spirits had long since blown apart, integrating into each other until there was nothing left except insanity. Poor imitations of what these spirits used to be.

Once, during some downtime at the end of summer, he'd found and read a book about a princess who could tap into the wind and communicate with it, but eventually it drove her insane due to the utter mayhem and chaotic unpredictability that came along with it. Innumerable fragmented thoughts, feelings, and whatever else that got carried on the air streams were too much for one person to handle. Jason wondered if the author of that book hadn't secretly been some child of Zeus or any of the other gods that dealt with weather patterns because he sure felt a touch of that madness they'd described as he tried to stay on one thought strand without getting tangented off on something completely random.

It was hard, though. He'd never tried to wrangle this many half-formed semi-aware currents at once, and each one toted along something interesting, be it a smell, remnant of a feeling or emotion, or simply just a few light imprinted images of landscapes previously visited. He kinda felt like Aeolus had looked that one time he'd been to his palace. Scattered. Not present. Mad.

Jason grit his teeth and forced himself to focus, connecting with the wind streams but not delving into them, just skimming across the surface. He lightly tested his control over them, bending and twisting them. To his surprise they did react, slowly and with obvious reluctance, but it was heartening to know this had a slim chance of working.

He let them go back to their natural patterns, but kept ahold of their metaphorical reins. He tried his best to ignore the unpleasant feeling of queasiness that was still plaguing him, and took a deep breath.

As he released it, he pushed down violently on the air streams, sending them towards the rapidly approaching ground. They tried to drag the ship with them, and it rocked unsteadily, but they were gone too fast to really do much. As they got to the edge of his radar, almost just out of reach, Jason braced himself.

There was an uncomfortable tugging sensation deep in his abdomen and then the air currents were rushing back up towards the ship at an alarming speed he hadn't expected. Oh shit, this was actually going to work. Well, for a few minutes at best, but hopefully it would be long enough for Leo to get his ship to actually function like he'd built it to.

Yes, this would work!

As the air streams gained in speed, a new worry sprouted in his mind.

This would work, but, as he was just starting to realize, it might work a little *too* well. His plan wasn't to shoot the ship back up to its original altitude, that sudden change in direction would likely cause more damage to the *Argo II,* not to mention whatever would happen to the people *inside* of it.

He hurriedly diverted as many extra currents as he could, releasing hold of them and letting them skitter off in every other direction. With the ones he still held, he began to will them into a different shape, so instead of straight pillars of wind rushing towards them, they started to curve outwards, making a nice cradle.

He finished wrangling them into position not a moment too soon, because they reached the falling ship just then.

No matter what, he knew this wasn't going to be a smooth catch and he was correct. As the air streams and the ship collided it felt like a

small earthquake rolled through the very bones of the ship. Surprisingly he didn't hear anything shatter or snap. Although he did hear the simultaneous *thump, thump, thumpthumpthump* of every single person in the room being thrown to the floor.

He held the air cradle as long as he could, hoping it would be enough. Ten seconds. Fifteen. Twenty.

Leo clicked the button furiously.

And then, mercifully, blessedly, Festus creaked over the speakers and the *Argo II* made a few sputtering lurches before the telltale undercurrent hum of the emergency engines kicked in.

Jason dropped control of the rogue air streams as if they physically burnt him and they wasted no time in flying as far away from him as they could. He opened his eyes and saw stars, little bursts of light popping in his vision. He carefully sat back on his haunches, one hand braced against the wall above Percy's head. His lips, nose, and fingers were tingling and he realized he'd been holding his breath since that last inhale.

He quickly let it out and sucked down some much needed oxygen as feeling bled back into his extremities.

Around the room his friends were slowly picking themselves up off the floor. Grover poked his head out of the cabinet to check if it was safe before gingerly unfolding himself from the small space he'd wedged himself into.

Leo let out a laugh that ended in a relieved sigh. "Man that was…that was *crazy!* "

Percy shot him a pointed glare, one hand pressed firm to his chest. "Leo-" he paused to gasp some more, "Leo what the *fuck* happened while we were gone?"

Leo slipped the battery cover back over the button and waved about vaguely. "I told you, something malfunctioned. Something happened to Festus, I…think he might be sick. Or something. Maybe an upset stomach-you know, I *told* him to stay away from the green hot sauce, but he just doesn't-"

" *Leo,* " Jason was able to choke out between the heaving gasps his lungs were drawing in. "Leo nothing goes on in this ship without you knowing about it. Don't pull that bullshit, just tell us what happened after we went into the memory."

Grover scuttled over on his hands and knees, crowding into the space between him and his best friend. "Hey, that's right! H-how'd that go? The memory?"

"*What happened,* Leo?" Percy asked again, irritation creeping into his voice, replacing the fear.

"I, uh, I have to go check on Festus, he's hurt really bad, I need to do so many system checks, I have to secure the backup engines, reset the auto fire extinguishers, replace the windows, and- *oh my god* I have to fix the *TVs-"*

" *Leo,* " Jason cut off his friend's rambling. "Please, just, *what's wrong with-"*

"I don't *know,* okay! I have no idea what all is fucking broken down

there!" Leo exploded. "I don't even know where to *begin,* it's a *disaster* down there. My friend is *hurt* and I want to-to help him. If I had a detailed list of everything wrong with Festus then believe me, Jason, I'd *show you!* All I do know is: the main engines, both flight and propulsion, are completely out of commission, there was some kind of- of *explosion* and the extinguishers went off so there was obviously a *fire,* and my fucking *televisions* are *shattered,* and it's *all my-* " He stopped abruptly to draw in a breath but before he could start up again on his rant Jason sighed and leaned backwards, collapsing against the wall next to Percy.

He closed his eyes and nodded, holding up one of his hands. "Okay, alright. I'm sorry, it's just…that was probably the worst possible thing to wake up to."

All the fight seemed to leave Leo. "Well…I mean you can *fly* so it's not like you had much…to…be…scared…" he trailed off at the look Jason was giving him, then shot a quick glance at Percy who averted his eyes, his cheeks coloring just a fraction.

Jason sighed again and scrubbed a hand through his hair as he looked around the room, watching the others start to make their way towards their little group.

"So," Grover prompted, as if this next bit of gossip was more important than the fact that they'd been literally falling out of the sky not five minutes ago. "The memory? How'd it go?"

Jason slowly closed his eyes and mumbled, "Awful. Like the rest of them. Just more lies…"

And just like that the fragile thread of peace between him and Percy shattered, much like the windows had. Sudden, but expected.

Percy grunted in agreement. "Yeah. Can't believe we lied to Thalia like that. She *trusted* us…"

"W-what do you mean you lied to her? About what?" Grover asked hesitantly.

Jason didn't want to be the one to say it, but Percy was clearly done talking, his jaw clenched shut, so he filled them in. "The same thing we told you guys in the bar: that we weren't with… *them* anymore." You could hear a pin drop in the silence that followed his reveal. "We *lied* to her and she *trusted* us."

"But-" Nico started and then stopped himself. They didn't say it, but Jason could feel the judgment rolling off his friends. Him and Percy had *lied* to his sister, the one person in the world that Jason considered blood family. They deserved the judgment, although he appreciated them refraining from actually mentioning it.

More uncomfortable silence followed.

Jason wasn't sure if the churning in his stomach was from the residual effect of overexerting his powers, or from the topic of conversation. The reminder.

A terrible thought occurred to him there, as he sat against the wall, everyone shooting these…these *looks* at each other over his and Percy's heads. Festus was damaged. The *Argo II* was severely compromised and judging by Leo's seemingly nonexistent idea of what needed to be fixed down there it sounded like the repairs might take a while. Which meant they'd have to rely on the backup engines, but they chugged along at a speed maybe a third of what the normal ones were capable of. Which meant it would delay their trip home. Great.

Jason surged to his feet, stomach still queasy. Everyone turned their eyes on him. Everyone but Percy.

He couldn’t stay here-needed to get away-to get away from *him.* From the awful feelings of-of…he didn't even *know* what Percy invoked in him. Sadness, maybe. Guilt. Regret. Hurt. Definitely hurt.

… *longing* . Lo-

No. Not that. Never that. They'd said it that night, but it wasn't like they'd been serio-

Frank started to stand, "Jason are you o-"

"Excuse me, I have to-" he didn't finish, his gag reflex beginning to trigger. He swiftly stepped around the crowd that had formed in the doorway and rushed to the bathroom, dodging random furniture strewn about.

He had about two seconds to thank Leo for installing failsafes so that none of the pipes would burst in the case of an event like today's were to happen before he disengaged the safe lock on the toilet.

When he was done heaving up nothing but stomach acid, he flushed and made his way over to the sink. He half expected Guido to be there before he realized he was in the other bathroom. Good.

He went through the robotic motions of brushing his teeth and splashing water on his face before steeling himself for the arduous

task that cleaning up this ship would likely prove to be.

He almost wished for the return of the chaotic madness that the rogue air streams had brought. Almost. At least then he wouldn't have to put too much thought into the mess he'd apparently gotten himself into. The end of that book couldn't come soon enough.

Chapter End Notes

I meant for this particular part of the story to be a lot shorter, as in just a brief explanation as to how the emergency went, but oh well

Comfort Where It's Needed

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Present Time- *Argo II*-

Leo's POV

Deep in the underbelly of his beloved ship Leo knelt amongst the twisted and burnt remains of the main engine. He picked up a metal rod, turning it over in his hands, feeling the warmth that still clung to it from the fire.

His plan worked.

…maybe a little too well.

This mess would take him…he didn't even know how long to clean up. There was a chance that most of this could be salvaged, reworked into usable pieces, but until he sorted, cleaned, and cataloged everything that was broken off, he'd-

A scuffling from above him shook him from his thoughts, and he recognized the low voices of Grover and Frank coming down the maintenance hallway. Leo dropped the metal he was holding and picked his way back to the large service door that he'd come through. His smaller tunnel had been blocked by a fallen cylinder.

His foot brushed up against the mangled remains of the pipe wrench that he'd used to sabotage his beautiful creation. He knelt down and

picked up what was left of it before hoisting himself up out of the service door on the floor. Better get rid of the evidence. He poked his head out to make sure Percy or Jason wasn't with the group before climbing the rest of the way out.

Nico and Will silently trailed behind Grover and Frank, with Hedge in close tow. Leo barely resisted the urge to roll his eyes. If they all kept traveling in a pack and meeting in secret then Percy and Jason would be sure to suspect something was happening behind their backs.

As they all filed into the engine room, Leo strutted over and lowered his voice. "Don't you guys think it's a *little* suspicious that you all disappeared at once? Do you want them to get paranoid? From now on we have to be more careful, alright?"

Nico guffawed, his pierced eyebrow arching up. "Those two are so busy pretending the other doesn't exist that I guarantee the only thing they notice *is* each other. Zeus himself could walk through the ship stark naked and on fire right now and they wouldn't even blink an eye."

"No, Leo is right," Grover cautioned, "even though they're preoccupied at the moment, the second Percy smells that something is off, he'll be all over us. He's very observant when it comes to people keeping secrets from him. Trust me on this, if he starts to get suspicious he won't let up until he's solved whatever it is he thinks is going on."

Leo nodded. "And you know that wherever Percy goes, Jason is sure to be close behind, sniffing around and keeping an eye out for anything he thinks might be a threat. Despite their little stand off they've got going on, those two aren't something we should write off so easily. They were already grilling me about what happened to Festus. I think I threw them off for the time being, but…we should be cautious. Just in case."

Nico let out a short exhale from his nose before dipping his head once in agreement. "Yeah, I suppose you're right. Percy's a persistent little pest and Jason will helicopter around him no matter what."

Despite the current events going on, Leo had to cough out a laugh at the mental image that conjured. All humor aside though, it was true. Jason was very protective - nay, almost *territorial* - of his friends, but *especially* of Percy. Gods forbid those two ever have children, Jason would be the helicopter parent from hell. The soccer mom on a mission. A real mother bear type, if past experiences are anything to go by.

Leo spared a stray thought for the picture in the album that had shown Jason dropping that first biker after he'd gotten in Percy's face.

How Leo hadn't figured out their feelings for each other sooner honestly baffled him. It was *right there* all along, they practically broadcasted it in neon lights. It was another wonder how Annabeth and Piper hadn't figured it-

"-and we…Leo? *Leo!"*

Leo blinked and focused back in on his surroundings, unaware that he'd trailed off so much into his own head he'd become unaware of everything else.

"Huh? Sorry, go ahead, I'm listening now."

Hedge pursed his lips but continued. "From now on we gotta watch how many of us congregate together. I opt for using the buddy system, only travel in twos and never stay in one place too long. Everyone agree? Good. Now to do what we really came down here to do." Hedge paused to throw a quick glance over his shoulder and back up

the maintenance hallway stairs before going on. "Grover, what did that lobster have to stay?"

Grover plucked irritatedly at his still-wet shirt and gave a scowl. "Not as much as I'd hoped. At least not much that was useful. I haven't spoken to a lobster in a long time so I was a little rusty but we communicated well enough. The problem was…well I knew lobsters were chatty, but Guido? Guido's a real word vomit factory. He talked plenty about Percy and Jason but most of it was just that: talk. Little dude has *opinions* and he's not shy about jabbering over it. I didn't really learn much that we didn't already know. Yeah, they were together last night but Guido wasn't there in person so he doesn't know anything they talked about. All he said was-" Grover cleared his throat and scratched at his bald head instead of finishing his sentence.

Will tapped his foot impatiently. "All he said was wh-"

"I'm getting to it!" Grover snapped. "He said that Percy paced around his room for a long time mumbling to himself before leaving for an undetermined amount of time. Guido kinda fell asleep after he left so he's not one hundred percent sure *how* long he was gone but he woke up later on in the night when Percy came back to the room in a hurry, looking panicked and agitated, smelling like he'd… well like… uh, like Jason… That must've been right before you saw them, Will, because Guido said Percy had come straight from the shower."

Will nodded thoughtfully and supplied, "Yeah I saw him around midnight, maybe one o'clock. What did Guido say happened then?"

"He said Percy and him argued about…well they just argued. That was actually the only part of the conversation he *didn't* spew words about. Apparently Guido tried to talk to Percy about wherever he'd been, which we now know was Jason's room, but Percy got snippy with him and, in his own words, 'evicted him from his room out of a sense of spite and the unbearable experience of being absolutely wrong and knowing it'. Whatever the hell that means. He tried to talk to you

when him and Percy ran into you in the hall but of course you had no idea what he was saying. That's pretty much it. He spent the night in the bathroom, babbling to anyone that walked in but not being able to actually *talk* to anyone. Until I came in. Not much else came up other than him telling me that on the Vegas night Percy and Jason had busted into some fancy restaurant and rescued him from the kitchens. It was right about there in his story when your distraction went off, Leo. Scared Guido so bad he splashed water all over me."

"So…we pretty much learned nothing?" Nico asked.

Grover's lips thinned out into a tight line and he nodded, crossing his arms. "Yeah. The conversation was…weird. It's like one minute he was jabbering on about anything under the sun but when his argument with Percy came up it felt like he was holding back some things, and he just got kinda quiet before changing the subject. He seemed really angry, or maybe sad, about whatever it was they talked about. I think maybe it has something to do with why Jason and Percy are avoiding each other, but Guido wouldn't talk about it anymore and before I got the chance to try and get it out of him the ship did a little jig and I got a shower."

A resigned silence settled over the group as Grover's words died off.

Hedge cleared his throat to break the quiet spell, saying, "Well, I'm sure you'll have more opportunities to talk to Guido, not that I think he really knows anything important, or at least that he'd tell us. Next time you do though, there hopefully won't be another distraction to spook him." Hedge turned on his hoof suddenly, stepping closer to Leo. "By the way… *what* a distraction that was, Valdez! Honestly, real good work there kid, very believable, just superb. Seriously, that was some Hermes kid level mischief right there! The smoke was," Hedge paused to give a disgustingly long chef's kiss. Leo swallowed, his throat dryer than the desert they almost just crash landed in. "The cherry on top. Although the freefalling and the alarms…" he gave an appreciative whistle, "I'm definitely going to you the next time I need a distraction. How'd you get the smoke to smell so realistic? A-and the *explosions?* How long did you work on putting that together? All

night? Because if not, then-”

“Leo?” Grover interjected, his eyebrows pulling together and dipping down. He stepped between him and Hedge. “Hey man, you alright?”

Leo tried to swallow again but found that his throat felt like it was glued together inside, giving him the momentary sensation of choking. He did just that. Choked. Just once, to clear his airway. It only helped a little bit, but he was able to swallow the lump in his throat, not that it did much good, the sensation just reappeared. Something on his face itched and Grover’s gaze snapped down to the spot. Leo scrubbed at his cheek with his wrist, pulling it away to find it smeared with grease and something wet. The skin around his eyes felt unnaturally hot as another tear managed to escape down his cheek. He scrubbed at it again, this time with the other hand.

Grover blinked in surprise. “Uh…”

Leo pulled his hand away, taking notice of the mangled wrench clenched in his fist. Grover took notice as well.

“L-Leo? What…”

Leo cleared his throat once more and tried to take a step back, but Grover caught him by the shoulders, holding him in place. Leo laughed, trying to inject a small amount of his normal humor into it. “Yeah, Coach? You liked my distraction? T-thanks, I, uh-”

“ *Leo,* ” Grover said again, much more forcefully. He tried not to meet his satyr friend’s eyes, instead looking past him, seeing his other friends’ faces starting to fall with realization. “ *Leo,* ” Grover repeated in a whisper. “Leo, what did you do?”

He lifted one shoulder in a halfhearted attempt at a shrug and brought the wrench back up. “Pretty realistic explosions right?”

Grover’s jaw dropped, but he was no longer focused on Leo. The satyr pushed him gently to the side and stumbled past him, heading towards the maintenance hole. Leo just stood where he was put, most of his energy leaving him. He wrung his hands around the wrench as everyone else crowded around the hole. A sudden, jerky movement caught his attention and he looked over at the group just in time to see Grover get down on his hands and knees, peering down into the engine room. Leo slowly dragged his feet over to them, stopping when he was situated on the other side of it, facing his friends.

Frank inhaled sharply, his hand coming up to cover his mouth, almost like he’d seen something horrifying, or grotesque. Leo didn’t blame him. The sight had churned his stomach the first time he’d seen it.

“Damn, kid…” Coach Hedge muttered. “When I said ‘stall the trip home’ I didn’t mean… I didn’t mean do something like *this.* ”

“You mean to tell us…” Will paused, tugging at the collar of his shirt, fiddling with the hem of it. “So when we were ‘falling’, we were actually… *falling* falling *?* ” He finished in a shaky voice.

“Technically, yes, but we would’ve been *perfectly* fine, even if Jason hadn’t-”

“Leo, what *happened?* Man, is…is Festus going to be okay?” Grover was still face down in the maintenance hole, his voice echoing hollowly in the soot and metal strewn cavity that housed the broken engine. “Are *you* going to be okay?” He added in a quieter voice, finally meeting his eyes.

Leo sighed, tapping the wrench a few times on the heavy hatch that was propped up. “Yeah Festus'll be just fine, I just gotta… patch him up a little. He’s been through worse, trust me. He’ll be back to new, like nothing ever happened.”

“W- *why* did you go to this extreme though?” Nico demanded. “Why not just *say* Festus was acting up? That he was malfunctioning or something, instead of *actually* fucking up all this-this - all your hard work?”

“Are you going to be okay, Leo?” Grover repeated gently.

“I *had* to do this, don’t you understand? Say I just made up a lie and said the ship was malfunctioning like you suggested, Nico. What happens when Percy or Jason gets suspicious that I haven’t fixed the problem within a few hours? They go looking, snooping around. They wouldn’t find anything, because nothing *would* be wrong. Remember that this *is* a ship, regardless of the fact that I built it into a mechanical dragon, okay? This is a *ship*. Specifically an *ancient Greek Trireme.* And we have the actual son of the *Greek god that governs ships* on deck. Percy’s amazing at problem solving, we’ve literally just been over this. I’m not one hundred percent sure how much control or knowledge, if any, Percy would have over the ship part of Festus considering a lot of it *is* mechanical, but I couldn’t chance it. He’s like me and machines when it comes to ships. One touch and he’s got the whole laydown of how everything works and the condition it’s in. I’ve *seen* him do things like that, alright, and I know you guys have too. It was either *actually* make something malfunction, or take the chance that Percy calls me out on a lie, so I took the sure route. And it couldn’t have been a small malfunction because Jason knows how easily I can fix things and how much I can’t bear to have things broken, so if it was something simple he would’ve gotten suspicious *very* quickly if it wasn’t repaired asap. So. Pipe wrench to the engine it was. It’s nothing I can’t fix, but this amount of damage?” Leo took stock of the engine room again. “It’s gonna take me at least a few days to get fully functional, and even Jason can’t dispute that. Thanks, really, for your guys' concern, but Festus will be fine.”

Leo inhaled a lungful of air after his short lecture. No one said anything, so he added, “And like I said, yes, for a moment we did lose all flight methods but we wouldn’t have crashed. Festus was in the process of rerouting the power sources to the backup engines, it was just taking a little longer than theorized. We would’ve gotten pretty close to the ground, but I assure you, we were not in any *actual* danger. Well…except maybe a little bit of lung damage from the smoke…but nothing permanent! Nothing a little fresh air couldn’t fix.” He finished with an uncertain laugh, once again trying to aim for humor but falling just short.

“Holy Hera…” Hedge muttered, his wide eyes still scanning the broken engine, no doubt remembering it in its former gilded, shiny glory.

Frank studied Leo, concern and worry etched into his normally peaceful face.

Grover got to his feet, brushing the soot from his fur as he did so. His shirt was a lost cause, the dampness of it having absorbed the color from the scorch marks, staining it black. “Okay, well…that, yeah, I guess that makes sense. Uh, we’ve been down here too long already, we should get back up there and help straighten everything up.” Leo was grateful for Grover’s suggestion. Everyone crowding around him was starting to make Leo a little claustrophobic.

Nico murmured something in Italian, before giving Leo a parting nod as he linked hands with Will and pulled him away, heading back upstairs.

“Yeah, good idea, Grover. I’m gonna just-” Hedge took the hint and pointed towards the way Nico had just gone, “-head out. Good, uh, good job, Leo. Smart thinking, glad to see someone’s got a plan around here. You just let me know if I can do anything for ya, alright?

Anything at all, kid." Then he was gone too.

Leo could tell that Grover wanted to linger and talk to him, but Frank leaned down and whispered something in his ear which made Grover hesitate for a split second before patting Frank on the arm and departing.

Leo tilted his head at Frank and opened his mouth to ask him what he needed, but nothing came out. His throat was feeling tight again. Great.

Frank shook his head and joined him on the other side of the maintenance hole. One of his giant hands settled gently on Leo's shoulder. Frank raised an eyebrow at him and wordlessly opened his other arm, holding it out.

Leo felt his chin wobble without his permission as he nodded vigorously, dropping the wrench at their feet so he could throw his arms as far around Frank's torso as he could. He closed his eyes and buried his face into Frank's shirt, feeling large arms engulf him in a hug he didn't realize he so desperately needed. Frank didn't say anything, just held him while Leo tried unsuccessfully to hold back tears, and that was just fine. Leo didn't need words, and Frank knew that. His presence was comfort enough. When Frank hugged you it was unlike anything else: your soul just seemed to settle into a state of peace you didn't know existed. Leo let himself be held, so, so glad that Frank had stayed back to make sure he was alright.

Frank's chin came down to rest on top of Leo's head, and he was sure they must have looked ridiculous, Frank's roughly six feet of height wrapping around Leo's five foot something body, but he didn't care. This was the most human contact he'd gotten in a while and Leo wasn't about to be the one that ended it early. He wasn't sure how long Frank let him cry into his chest, but eventually the tears did stop, but even then Frank didn't let him go. He seemed content to stay like that until Leo wanted to leave.

After a while Leo thought maybe he'd heard something scuffle nearby but wrote it off, the sound too soft to really concern him. That is, until-

"Hey, Leo, you down here? I wanted to talk to you a little more about what happened earli- oh."

Leo turned his head enough to peek over Frank's heavily tattooed arm, finding Jason standing with one foot on the last step of the staircase, the other frozen in midair, both his hands raised in surprise. Curse him and his light-on-his-feet nature. The guy could sneak up on Argus himself without even meaning to. He knows, he's *seen* it happen.

"S-sorry, I didn't mean to interu-"

Before Leo could say anything, he honestly didn't even know *what* he would've said because, yeah, now that he thought about it, this definitely looked like more of an embrace than a friendly comfort hug, Frank's chest rumbled with his deep voice.

"Jason, now's not the time. Leave and come back later." Leo had never heard Frank sound so dismissive and short with someone, let alone *Jason* , a former superior, before.

Jason's eyebrows shot up in surprise at Frank's obvious dismissal issued in a commanding tone, but, like a good little Roman, didn't talk back to his Praetor. Even if Jason had since officially retired from the Legion to attend college when Percy did, the discipline that had been drilled into him since he'd arrived at New Rome when he was a child wouldn't let him.

Jason’s hands dropped to his sides at the same time his teeth audibly clacked together as he snapped his mouth closed. For a split second he hovered where he was, shuffling awkwardly on the last step, his dominant hand twitching a few times like he was fighting the urge to salute his superior officer, an old habit Leo was sure grated on Jason’s nerves like crazy, but in the end he managed an absurd nod that clumsily morphed into a hilarious looking semi-bow. Jason’s face pulled up into a twist of confusion and self irritation before turning sharply and fleeing up the stairs.

Leo buried his face in Frank's shirt again, but this time his shoulders shook with mirth instead of sobs. He snorted and laughed, unable to help himself, the image of Jason, confident, bigger than life, Jason looking so awkward and unsure of himself branded across his vision.

Frank pulled back a bit, clearly unsure of exactly what was happening to Leo. “What?” He asked, his voice tilting up at the end in a worried question.

Leo had to catch his breath before being able to answer. “N-nothing, it’s just-” another laughed barked out of him, ending in a snort. He covered his mouth with one hand, mortified. “I don’t think Jason knew what to do with himself just then. I’ve never seen him look so-so-...so *gawky* and *ungraceful* before. I don’t know, he always seems so perfect, it just really got me. My gods, that fucking *bow*. He *bowed* to you, Frank. *Jason.* ”

Frank’s flushing cheeks twitched and he flashed his teeth at Leo in an ear splitting grin.

Now it was Leo’s turn to ask, “What?”

Frank laughed, smile lines crinkling the corners of his eyes. “Nothing, it’s just- it’s stupid, nevermind.”

“No, come on, I wanna know. I told you why *I* laughed.”

Frank rolled his eyes heavenward, fighting another grin. “Un *grace* ful.” Frank muttered and glanced back down, then looked away again. “See, I told you, just a stupid joke, it wasn’t even that funny.”

Frank’s lips twitched again as he stared back at the stairs where Jason had been a moment ago. Finally he turned back to Leo. They watched each other for a short stretch of time.

And then they just started laughing. Real, bellyaching, tears in their eyes, laughing. They laughed until Leo had to double over, resting his hands on his knees to catch his breath. Some part of him felt honestly bad for laughing at his best friend's expense, but it felt *good* , healing even, to laugh this hard with Frank, regardless of the cause of the humor.

As their laughs died down, Leo straightened up, one hand placed over his ribs while Frank wiped tears from his own face.

“Well,” Leo managed to get out between residual bubbles of laughter, “I gotta get down there and start sorting through everything. Thanks…thank you for, you know, for making sure I was alright. F-for the hug.”

Frank ruffled Leo’s hair, a genuine smile on his face. “Any time, Leo. People underestimate the power of hugs, I keep saying it, you know, but no one listens.”

Leo couldn’t even pretend to be upset that his hair had been messed up, he just nodded slightly, feeling much better than he had before his

breakdown.

“Hey, uh, I might need some heavy lifting down there, especially with the cylinders, they’re *huge*. If you don’t wanna get stuck cleaning up there with the two resident catfighting drama queens, do you wanna maybe help me with the engine? I could use the company too…”

Leo got another Zhang-brand smile as Frank sat on the floor and lowered himself down into the engine room. “That sounds miles better than whatever the hell is probably going on upstairs right now. We know at least Jason won’t be coming down here for a while yet. Let’s get to work on fixing your ship.”

He joined Frank below and that's just what they did.

Chapter End Notes

I went on a much needed vacation so this chapter was more delayed than usual, but it was so worth it

The Dream

Chapter Notes

SLIGHT TW FOR MENTION OF POTENTIAL EATING DISORDER

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time- *Argo II*-

Percy's POV

The rest of that day was spent in relative silence, everyone focused on cleaning and organizing whatever had gone astray during the disaster Percy had woken up to. When his heart had kindly crawled back down his throat and was settled in its rightful place again, he had been able to pick himself up off the floor with the others. Jason, face pale and looking like he was on the verge of vomiting, had fled down the hallway before Percy had managed to gather himself together enough to even entertain the idea of standing up.

He'd only seen him once more that day, just in passing. Jason had come up from the engine room irritated and fidgety so Percy had assumed he'd gone down there to speak to Leo and hadn't liked what he'd had to say. Percy decided to give it a while before he braved the trek down.

A while ended up being around two hours. That was as long as he could make himself wait before he found himself wandering closer and closer to the stairs that led to the engine room. Despite what Percy's instincts had driven him to during the fall, he and Jason were still avoiding each other. He listened intently, trying to pick up any noise from below lest he accidentally stumble across Jason down there and have to flee back up the stairs, but the only sounds were that of metal clanking and the occasional loud bang. No voices.

There did end up being another person down there but it was just Frank. In fact, he'd been the first person that poked their head out of the maintenance hole when Percy had walked down there.

Frank, smudged with soot and grease, saw it was him, gave him a short grunt, then looked below him. "It’s Percy, want me to tell him to get lost?" He whispered not so quietly to who Percy assumed was Leo. He tried not to feel miffed by it. No wonder Jason had scurried out of here in a hurry earlier, Frank must've chased him off.

A muffled reply was all Percy heard in return before Frank nodded and dropped back down. Leo hauled himself up and sat on the edge of the hole, legs dangling down. He fixed Percy with a serious glare, pushing his frazzled hair off his forehead in the process, but only succeeding in smearing more engine refuse across his face. "Yes, the damage is bad. No, I don't know how long it'll take to fix. No, I also don't have an estimated time either, but if I had to give one, I'd say about four-ish days. As to when we’ll be able to make it home?" Leo shrugged and kicked his feet. “The backup engines run at about half the speed of the normal one so I’d guess five days to a week.”

He went to make a protest, but Leo held up a hand and Percy shut his mouth.

"Yeah, I *know* that's a long time, and if I keep getting interrupted it's gonna take even *longer*. It's a fucking disaster down here, would you like to come and see?" Leo offered with an exaggerated point downwards. "I've just managed to get the cylinders unfused from each other and had a major oil leak because the hull tank had torn in one of them." Leo held up his other hand, which was coated from elbow to fingertips in a golden viscous fluid. Percy also took note of the same substance staining Leo's pants all the way up to mid thigh. "It's quite fun down here, would you like to join me and Frank? We were just about to shovel all several hundred gallons of the oil into some drums, then we gotta scrub the residue off the floor. We're gonna need someone to take a toothbrush to the underside of the engine." Leo scrunched his face up and continued in a sardonic tone. "Man, that's gonna be a real blast, but I'm willing to give up my spot if you wanna

do it, Percy. I think you could probably fit down there."

Ha ha. He could tell his presence here was not wanted at the moment. Point taken.

"Yeah, alright, sorry for bothering you. I'll just be leaving now."

Leo tilted his head. "Leaving? Why, is it because you don't want to scrub the engine? Well that's okay, after the oil is cleaned up, Frank was going to piece all the gears and cogs together. Might take a while, he could use the help, shits like a twenty thousand piece puzzle down here, man. Just gotta dig 'em out of the ol' oil lake first, of course. Some are probably bent though, so he'll have to bang them out straight first with a hammer."

Percy tried to leave but Leo's face lit up and his mouth curved into a sly smile. "You know, I think you'd actually be really great at that last part, Percy. Since you've already got some experience banging straight things recen-"

"Alright, I get it!" Percy snapped, feeling his cheeks flame scarlet, but in embarrassment or anger he didn't know. Probably both. Did Leo really just…make a joke about him and Jason? Now, of all times?

He could hear Frank's startled and quickly aborted laughter coming from the engine hold.

Percy bit his tongue, took one last look around the room, which was empty except for a self-satisfied Leo and a long piece of twisted metal lying next to the hole, and turned on his heel to exit as quickly as possible.

Will gave him a questioning look as he brushed past him in the hallway after leaving the stairs, but Percy avoided eye contact and went to busy himself with something distracting enough to make him forget Leo's snide remark. He tried not to dwell on it, knowing that Leo was just upset and preoccupied with his damaged ship.

That didn't mean it didn't grate on his nerves though. He fought his anger down and started sweeping up the various debris that had settled on the floor of the dining room. Most of the damage was centered here in this room and the engine room, of course, but Leo's prickly attitude was down there and Jason's suffocating presence wasn't in *here* so Percy figured this was the best place for him to be. The windows that had been blown out were now sealed shut with the emergency steel shutters that activated when the ship had stabilized. No natural light was able to find its way in so the room was lit only by the ceiling fixtures, casting an unnatural fluorescent hue on everything. The fritzing TV screens weren't helping matters, and in almost no time he had a piercing migraine chiseling away at the back of his eyes.

He knelt down to sweep the remaining debris into the dustpan and caught sight of the corner of the wedding album where it had slid under the table. He stared at it, entertaining the idea of just tossing it in the garbage with the rest of the shit from the floor but couldn't bring himself to actually do it. Instead, he dumped the dustpan into the trash can and picked up the album. Flipping it open to the title page, he watched his and Jason's picture selves kiss under the wedding bells a few times.

The two older men exiting the room behind them caught his eye again but he still couldn't place who they were, just that they felt familiar to him in some way. Probably some of Axel's gang.

A scuffle broke the silence he'd found himself in and Percy slapped the book closed, turning around quickly, defenses up.

No one was there, just an empty doorway. Percy released the breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding and tossed the album onto the table. He needed a nap. Maybe it would get rid of this stupid headache and calm his nerves some. Make him less jumpy and paranoid. Waking up to a free fall through the air had seriously jumbled his senses.

-Present Time-Percy's Room-

Percy's POV

Sleep hadn't come easy to him.

He'd tossed and turned, head filled with hundreds of conflicting thoughts about everything that was going wrong with his life right now. When he eventually did manage to fall asleep, his rest was anything *but* restful.

Annabeth's kind, gentle eyes leveled on him. She was sitting on the bunk opposite his in the Poseidon cabin. No one else was here with them. She leaned forward taking his hands in hers and he was startled to see a drop of wetness on his knuckles. He hadn't realized he'd shed that tear.

"Percy." Her melodic voice said his name and he had no choice but to look up at her. “I need to talk to you about something.”

She opened her mouth to speak again but in that exact moment the world around him seemed to…glitch, almost. His surroundings froze and became fuzzy, bleeding into each other. Annabeth herself seemed to stand up, but only…that wasn't quite true. She stayed sitting across from him, but she also stood up. Her form seemed to morph and leave a light impression trailing behind her, almost as if he was watching a time-lapse of her movements.

He, too, moved the same way, his arms waving around in slow motion as he gestured widely. Their voices were not discernable, but he could tell they were speaking to each other. Calm at first, but quickly becoming heated, the sounds buzzing around him like a swarm of angry wasps. Annabeth paced around his room, filling it with hundreds of blurry versions of her body as she distractedly pushed a lock of her hair out of her face. Her voice tapered off and she stopped in front of his mirror, staring at him in the reflection.

He saw himself stand up, saw his mouth open and heard the distorted murmuring that followed. Whatever he'd said caused Annabeth to spin quickly on her heel, rounding to face him, the sudden movement creating an Annabeth tornado. Thankfully she stepped towards him, out of the clustered blur she'd unintentionally made. Her fists clenched and unclenched, one of her hands waving around next to her head, as if she were trying to get him to listen to what she was telling him.

This time when she spoke, some of it was actually clear enough for him to understand, although he wished he couldn't after he'd heard it.

Her face scrunched up in irritation.

"- I know you-" her voice cut out to static for a brief second before clarifying again, "-behind my back with Jason, Percy!" static again, "-not stupid, you know! If you'd just listen *to me-"*

Percy reached out and caught one of her hands, holding on to it desperately. "Annabeth, please, what-" static, "-no idea what you-"

She closed her eyes, all of the fight leaving her as she appeared to shut down. Tired and world-weary, she shook her head slowly, pulling her hand out of his grasp. "-talk when you get back, but-" fucking static again, "-

him. Piper said she-" static, "-you and Jason."

The Argo II's *loud horn boomed from outside.*

Annabeth closed her eyes again and turned around, reaching for the door. "It's time for you to go, Percy. Have fun on your trip. Remember what I told you, okay?"

If only it were so easy.

"Annabeth, wait-"

She pulled the door open with a short jerk of her arm. Behind it stood Piper, arms crossed and eyelashes wet. She gave a sparing glance at Percy, but quickly looked back at Annabeth. She turned and both girls started down the steps to the grass. Percy rushed to the door, ready to plead his case once more, whatever it may be, but locked eyes with Jason, who was just now rushing out of his own cabin.

"Piper! Don't just leave in the middle of-" Jason's voice died abruptly when he saw Percy. The two boys stared at each other, both at a loss of what to say.

Piper broke the moment with a small little hum that could've easily been mistaken for a sigh. Annabeth was watching Percy, her expression carefully devoid of any emotion, arms wrapped tightly around her middle. Piper nudged her with an elbow and they both resumed their walk away from them. Piper took one last glance back at Jason before Annabeth pulled her inside the Athena cabin, the door slamming shut behind them.

Standing outside the cabin one of Annabeth's brothers - Jack, Percy

thought his name was - jumped at the noise, turning to look in Percy's direction, searching for the source of his sister's mood. Jack saw Percy standing there, and instead of the friendly wave he normally would've gotten, Jack's calculating eyes narrowed, his sharp mind probably filtering through every possibility he could come up with. Whichever one he landed on obviously wasn't in Percy's favor, because Jack turned his back to him and strolled off.

When Percy glanced back at Jason, he too was staring at the door their girlfriends had disappeared through. He must have felt Percy's eyes on him, because he turned his head and they locked gazes again.

He wasn't sure how long they would've stayed there like that, unblinking and unmoving, but he never got the chance to find out, because Leo blew the ship's horn again and it startled them out of the stand off. Jason visibly jumped, breaking eye contact immediately, right before Grover came running towards them.

"Guys, come on, everybody is ready to go!"

Percy woke up in a cold sweat, heart pounding in his chest, legs tangled in his blanket.

What the fuck was that? What kind of dream-

Unless it wasn't a dream. It hadn't felt like the other memories he'd recovered thus far, but then again he hadn't been asleep for those.

He sat forward, bringing his knees up, wrapping his arms around them and resting his sweaty forehead on his knees. He forced his breathing to even out, alarmed at his body's reaction. He usually only woke up like this from a nightmare, and even then only from the worst ones, the ones involving Tartarus and other similar topics.

Although it wasn't a nightmare, Percy still felt shaken, still wanted the comfort he usually sought after waking in the dead of night.

But there was no one to seek it from. The only two people he'd ever gone to for this were unavailable to him right now. Annabeth was back at camp and Jason, just in the next room, felt even further away than her.

He took another deep breath, sat in his position for another few minutes, and then climbed out of bed, deciding to take a shower and wash away the gross feeling that clung to his skin. He took the extra time to walk all the way to the other bathroom, avoiding the one Guido had been banished to. He didn't see anyone roaming about the ship, having slept far longer than a simple nap usually called for. While he was in the shower he mulled over the dream again.

Annabeth's initial calm demeanor hadn't prepared him for the rest of the conversation. He felt a bubble of panic well up in his chest as he replayed some of her words.

"-behind my back with Jason, Percy!"

What did she mean by that? He tried not to jump to any conclusions because half of her sentences had been scrambled and unintelligible, and isn't that what always made things worse in movies and stories? One person jumping to some asinine conclusion based on a partial conversation they'd heard and in the end they realize they'd misheard or misinterpreted whatever it was? He fought off the panic and tried to reason in the context of their talk. Nothing helpful came to him immediately.

The accusatory tone Annabeth had used just kept forcing him to the

worst possible conclusions. From what Percy had been able to glean from what little he'd been able to hear only pointed in one direction: she had thought he'd been cheating on her with Jason way before this trip even happened.

" *Stop it…"* he muttered to himself out loud. "It has to be something else. You're doing exactly what you said you wouldn't do."

He hadn't been involved with Jason before the trip, he *knew* that. They were close, yes, perhaps closer than friends were strictly supposed to be, but he'd never crossed that line. And neither had Jason. Hell, Percy had never even thought of a line *to* cross. Whatever Annabeth had been talking about, it couldn't have been that, and on the frighteningly small chance that she *had* meant it…

The thought brought nausea to his stomach.

The idea that Annabeth had been implying Percy was engaging in such… *disloyal* behavior stoked wood on the fire of his carefully pushed aside panic.

Loyalty. His fatal flaw, something that was supposed to drive him in his decisions. Athena herself had told him that. *Excessive* loyalty, in fact.

Cheating was basically the antithesis to loyalty.

And yet, here he was, having done exactly what his flaw implied he couldn’t do.

He thought maybe that was what fucked him up so much about all

this, not the fact that he'd gotten blackout drunk, married his guy friend, consumated said marriage, joined a gang, and defaced a statue of his uncle-father-in-law, but that he'd done all that while still tied to Annabeth.

Percy closed his eyes and leaned against the cool tiles of the shower wall, just letting the water wash over him and erase all thoughts from his head. He concentrated on nothing but the calming *woosh*- ing that drowned out everything else and once again smothered the flame of panic that had been steadily growing larger in his chest.

He could do this, he could hold himself together long enough for them to get home, for him to get some answers. There was no denying that with the way things were right now, no more pages would be looked through in the album. Definitely not with the way he and Jason were avoiding each other coupled with the content of what Percy was sure would be quite a few pages showing nothing but the two of them engaging in all sorts of wedding activities.

An image of the two lace garters that were still around the pineapple in Jason's luggage flashed through his mind.

Good gods, he hoped they didn't feature a garter removal when they got married. The thought alone gave him horrible second hand embarrassment. Blessedly it was only second hand, since he didn't personally have that memory, but if that happened to be pictured in the album, if they actually *did* do it… well at least it wasn't the worst thing they'd done that night.

His stomach rumbled angrily, reminding him that he'd had little next to nothing to eat that day. He thought about ignoring it, just making himself go to bed, and dealing with it in the morning, but quickly admonished himself. A voice, sounding suspiciously like Jason's, nagged at him in the back of his mind for neglecting his health. It brought up memories of a time just after the Giant War ended, when 'normal' had been difficult to get back to.

It wasn't a healthy habit, and certainly not one he'd been proud of, but when you go for days on end ignoring hunger pains in a place where the only thing to really eat had been liquid fire or mystery stew - with the exception of a few stolen offerings - you kinda got used to it. Annabeth had never noticed that most of what went on his plate ended up in the offering fire, or in the garbage.

Jason, though…

Percy knew that it was around that time, that very fragile, almost dream-like, time when he and Jason started to get to know each other better. He'd honestly expected it to be Annabeth on the other side of his door when he'd answered the knock that had woken him up in the middle of the night a few days into his unintentional fasting. Instead of her it was Jason, plate of food in hand and a stern look on his face. A stern look that didn't quite mask the worry underneath.

"Here," he said gruffly, shoving the plate into his hands .

Percy stared at him, not sure what exactly was happening. "Uh, thanks?" he replied hesitantly. "Dinner was four hours ago, you know. I already ate. Plus it's past curfew, you shouldn't be-"

"No you didn't."

Percy shuffled on his feet, suddenly feeling like a child caught doing something naughty. "Didn't what?" One of Jason's eyebrows went up at the same time his lips pressed together tightly, his scar standing out all the more for it. "Dude, what? It's the middle of the night, go back to your cabin. And take this with you," Percy told him, meaning to shove the plate back into Jason's hands, but the blond just crossed his arms and stood his ground.

He held the dish out between them for a few long, tense minutes, neither willing to back down. His stomach chose that moment to loudly announce its displeasure at the situation. Percy expected another eyebrow raise, but all he got was a flicker of worry peeking through Jason's carefully set features.

When he thinks back on that look he knows that's what broke his resolve.

Percy rolled his eyes, pulling the plate back towards him with a heavy sigh. Wordlessly, he stepped back, opening the door to his cabin wider in a silent gesture of invitation. Jason lingered on the doorstep, clearly not anticipating Percy giving in so easily, but in the end he followed him inside, probably expecting him not to eat if he wasn't there to hover. Smart man.

Percy sat on his bed, Jason choosing to sit on the one directly across.

"So," Percy started awkwardly, not knowing what to say. "Why?" is what he settled on.

"You haven't been eating." Percy expected his answer, expected it to sound accusatory or angry, but it didn't. Jason's voice was hollow and he didn't know how to respond to that. He didn't have to, because immediately after, Jason followed with, "Why?"

He supposed it was a fair question, even if he'd asked it first.

"That's…it's a long story."

"Perseus."

The use of his name shocked him enough that it caused him to finally look up. Talk about feeling like a child in trouble. “Oh man, using my full government name?” He attempted a laugh, a thin stretch at trying to bring humor into this odd situation. “I must’ve really done it this time. Sorry, mom, for-”

“Percy, you’ve lived through too much shit to die this way.” Jason's blunt answer sent another shock through him.

“Hey, woah, I-I’m not dying *, I just- I’m just…It’s hard…” He tried to absolve Jason’s extreme worry, deny what he was implying, but his words kept getting jumbled up when he went to speak them.*

Jason shifted a bit on the bed, reaching into his pajama pocket and withdrawing something that looked like a crumpled business card. He stared at the front of it for a long pause, his knee incessantly bouncing, his hands fidgety. Finally, after what seemed like hours, Jason held out the card to him. Percy set the plate of food down on the sheets next to him and took the offered card. Before he even saw what it was he could tell that this had been in Jason’s pocket for a while, maybe a week or more, with how worn the edges were. It was very pliant, like a hand had often reached into the pocket to fiddle with the paper, maybe as a nervous tic, maybe to draw it out but hesitating every time.

He gave Jason a cautious look before turning it over, and almost subsequently dropping it when he saw the front.

“What is this?” He asked shakily. “Is this some kind of joke?”

It was a business card after all. One for a therapist in New Rome.

“Percy,” Jason said again, drawing his attention away from the card. “I’m not going to pretend to know what to do, or how to help you, but what I do know is that what you’re doing isn’t healthy. It might not seem like a big deal right now, but it could become one, very easily. I’ve seen it happen, okay? I don’t think anyone else has noticed yet, and I promise I won’t tell anyone, but I do want to help you. I can make you eat, but that’s not really going to help, is it? It’s just going to make you hate me.”

Percy looked away from him and mumbled, “I think you’re making this out to be a bigger problem than it is. I still eat, but like I said, it’s hard. I’m not…I’m not…”

Jason continued. “This person,” he reached over and tapped the card, “she’s very nice. I used to serve with her in the Legion, she was from my-from our *cohort. She retired a few years ago, went to the college in New Rome, got her PHD in psychology. I know there’s a kind of…stigma… about seeing people like her, but it’s all confidential, no one has to know, if you don’t want them to. You don’t have to explain anything to me, but I think you should give her a try. If you don’t like it, you don’t have to keep going.”*

They were silent for a long time, nothing but the sound of the saltwater fountain bubbling to fill the room. Eventually, Percy pushed his stubbornness aside long enough to ask, “What if it doesn’t help?”

“What if it does?” Jason countered. “It can’t hurt to try.”

Percy wanted to argue, to yell and curse, maybe throw hands or cross blades, but in the end he knew Jason was right. It had *been on his mind to get Chiron alone in the near future and ask him if he knew something that could help with the nausea he got from eating, but he knew himself and he would have just kept putting it off.*

“…okay.”

“Okay?”

Percy set the card on his nightstand next to his pen so he wouldn’t forget it in the morning. “Okay, I’ll talk to her.”

He could hear the relief in Jason’s voice when he said, “Oh, that’s good, that-that’s really good. I-yeah, I’m glad. I was-…well I’m happy that you-”

Percy decided to spare him. “Thank you. It’s…nice to be…” he searched for the right word, “Mother-Hen’d for once.”

Jason nodded his head, hands fiddling with a loose string on fabric of his pajamas. “You’re welcome.”

Percy heaved a sigh and picked up the plate Jason had brought with him, finally noting what was on it. He suppressed a laugh when he saw that basically everything *was on it. Little portions of all his favorite foods. There was even a tiny blue cupcake, right next to a grilled chicken breast. “And to think, in the early days of our friendship we tried to kill each other.”*

Jason laughed, some of the tension in the air bleeding away. “Yeah, well, don’t all the great friendships start like that?”

That night was the first night he and Jason spent together, just talking about random things that had happened throughout the week, or playing a few silly card games with the deck Tyson had left behind last time he’d been by to visit.

It was also the first time in a while Percy had been able to eat until his hunger had gone away without feeling sick afterwards.

He'd kept his promise to Jason and had gone to see the therapist once they'd all started college in New Rome that very fall. Jason had been right after all, Percy shouldn't have been surprised. Cora, her name was, ended up being one of the kindest people Percy had ever met, and she'd been very helpful as well. She reminded him a lot of his mom, and he went back to see her quite a few times. It had been years since then, but he still went out to lunch with her on occasion. Sometimes Jason would tag along as well.

Percy shook himself out of reminiscing long enough to notice that the water had gone ice cold. He turned the shower off and, after getting dressed, headed to the kitchen to get something to eat before going back to sleep. He thought about having something quick and simple, but before he knew it his plate had conjured up a replica of the one Jason had shown up with that night.

Dwelling on Jason was pretty much the last thing he wanted to do right now, but he couldn't help that this had long since become his comfort dish. He tried not to think about it too much.

Too bad that was when the man himself decided to walk past the kitchen doorway. Percy froze, hoping he'd just continue on, but he had to have sensed a presence watching him because Jason stopped suddenly and made eye contact with him. Neither said a word, even though Percy's mind was screaming at him to mention his dream-memory of Annabeth and see if Jason had a similar experience, since most of their memories seemed to pull both of them in.

Jason stared, face blank, for a few more seconds before his eyes flicked down to the plate in Percy's hand. Some emotion cracked through his facade but it was so fleeting that he couldn't tell exactly what it was.

Then he was just gone. Without preamble or a sound, Jason turned and walked away, footsteps receding down the residential hallway.

And that’s how it was for them for the next three days. If one walked into a room, the other left. If they had to be in the same space for any amount of time they acted like the other didn’t exist.

Chapter End Notes

> Leo gets a little prickly when people keep him from repairing his ship, but he didn't have to do Percy dirty like that

Suspicious Fixings

Chapter Notes

> This is a shorter one only because it was originally part of a much larger chapter but I decided to split them up into two. So chapter 29 is actually already finished and ill be releasing it in a few days!

-Present Time-*Argo II*-

Jason's POV

Things on the ship had been…tense, to say the least. When Jason had been brave enough to track down Leo again he'd been informed that the trip home would probably be delayed for roughly a week while repairs were made. That was three days ago.

Jason wasn't sure but he thought maybe they were somewhere over Colorado or Nebraska, or hopefully Iowa. He was just glad it wasn't Kansas. Gods, he *hated* Kansas.

His theories about what state they were in were dashed, however, when he happened by the dining room and overheard Leo say in a hushed tone, "Wyoming isn't the most ideal place to stop, but we're gonna have to refill on oil sometime. Festus is burning through what little we were able to save faster than I th-"

" *Wyoming?"* Jason blurted in shock. Leo and Grover startled, spinning to see him, twin looks of surprise on their faces. "Wha- how did we get over Wyoming?"

"We kinda, uh, drifted up here. I had to fix the nav system so it synced

with the back up engines but I had to turn it off for a few hours to do that." Leo said.

"A few hours? How did we go so far north in a few *hours?* "

Grover and Leo shared a guilty look before Leo spoke again.

"Okay, so don't be mad, but I forgot to restart the navigation before I went to bed that night. It was off for more than a *few* hours, it was more like, uh-" Leo paused, ticking off his fingers as he used them to count, "twenty hours…give or take."

" *How* ?" He took a step into the dining room, "How did you just-" Jason stopped in his tracks as Percy wandered in from the kitchen entrance.

Leo and Grover followed his line of sight and Jason took the opportunity to slip back out into the hallway while they were distracted. He didn't stick around to eavesdrop. By the time they looked back he was already gone, retreating to a safer, less Percy-filled room.

It was childish, he knew, but this is what things had become with them.

Jason hates it.

He missed the days he'd grown to expect - to look forward too. The days back before this trip, when the certainty of seeing Percy brought excitement and happiness, when more often than not he'd be the first thing Jason saw when he woke up in the morning. He missed the

times when Percy would slip into his room in the middle of the night and snake his way into his bed, not in a sexual way, but to seek comfort from him, whether it be comfort from a nightmare or just to sprawl on top of him and bask in the heat Jason always seemed to exude.

The simpler times.

The *Argo II* was big, but in these last few days it felt smaller than ever. He and Percy kept happening across each other in the most unexpected places, like out of the way halls that no one ever uses, or down in the empty stables. It could have been because they were both actively trying to avoid each other and that in turn pushed them to the same rarely used areas of the ship, but Jason had a strong suspicion their friends were partially responsible for it.

Strangely enough, he even suspected *Nico* to be in on it, if there even was an 'it' to begin with and Jason wasn't just paranoid to all hades and back.

But two days ago the ship mysteriously lost power for a few seconds, and when the lights came back on a freaked out Percy had stumbled right into his chest from seemingly out of nowhere. That by itself wasn't really what had Jason on edge, no, it had been that Jason *knew for a fact* Percy had *just* been in his room. He knew, because he saw him go in there and hadn't heard him come back out, and after he saw that, Jason had left to find an unoccupied corner of the ship.

That, and the fact that Percy had been in his boxers with a t-shirt tangled around his arms, as if he'd been in the process of changing clothes.

Of course the others would just deny it if he asked, so he didn't bother. Plus, there was the small chance that Jason had simply gone

insane and stir crazy, putting stock in things that weren't really what they appeared to be. Who knows.

That didn't mean he wasn’t cautious.

Which is why when Leo found him two hours later and asked for his help, Jason hesitated to offer it.

"Why, what do you need me to do?" He questioned, trying not to sound accusatory.

"You act like I'm gonna ask you to cut your arm off, dude, chill out. I just need someone tall to reach something I can't. That's all," Leo assured him, hands spread out as if to say, *see, no reason to be suspicious here.*

Jason narrowed his eyes, his head involuntarily cocking to the side. "So go ask Frank."

Leo shoved his hands into his pockets and shrugged. "He's busy," he replied.

"I'm sure he'll stop what he's doing to help you." Jason had absolutely no right to call up the scene he'd walked in on three days ago considering his own predicament, but something about this situation gave him weird vibes. "He seemed pretty attached to you the other day." It wasn't like Jason to be petty, he didn't like doing it. But these days he wasn't feeling quite himself.

Other than a slight flush darkening Leo’s cheeks, his friend didn't seem too bothered by what he'd said. Leo shrugged again, calm as ever.

"He's up in the control room, doing some work on the console for me. Real time sensitive stuff. Don't wanna pull him away."

Jason stared at Leo. Then stared some more. "Frank's working on the control board?"

Leo rocked on his heels. "Yup," he confirmed, popping the 'p' sharply.

"Frank's working on the control board…*without* you?" He clarified.

Leo pulled a hand out of his pocket to itch his nose where a smear of grease had taken up residence. "Yeah, so? I trust him."

He couldn't pretend the twinge of jealousy that ran through him wasn't from what his best friend said. Leo rarely let *anyone* work on his ship, let alone when he wasn't hovering over their every move. He knows, he's tried to offer to assist him in the past.

Jason sniffed, turning his head away. "So get a ladder. It's this magical thing that was invented so short people can reach the things tall people can."

From behind him he heard Leo sigh. "Can't find it. Tried that first, man. Plus, what I need you for is kinda something in your area of expertise."

Jason stayed silent, stubborn.

" *Please* , Jason? I could really use my best friend to help me out on

this…"

He wasn’t falling for it. Whatever mysterious thing Leo wanted him to do could stay a mystery for all he cared.

Another sigh. "Alright then. I guess I can go ask Percy. He's not as tall as you, but if you *really* don't want to hel-"

" *Fine* ," Jason relented. "If you actually need my help that badly, I'll do it."

Leo grinned. "Great! Like I said, it’s right up your alley."

The task was, no surprise here, completely bullshit.

Jason glared up at the dark, smoky light bulb in the fixture above the kitchen counter.

"A *light bulb* , Leo? *This* is what you so desperately needed me for? How is this 'my area of expertise'?" He demanded.

Leo shoved a new bulb into his hands. "Electricity, my dude. 'S basically condensed lightning, right?"

Jason tried not to break the bulb in his grip. " *That doesn't mean it has to be me that changes it!* You don't even need a ladder, you could've just climbed on the counter!"

Leo pulled a face, like he'd somehow greatly offended him. "Listen to yourself," he scoffed, "climb on the counter where people make their *food* , Jason? How unsanitary. Just change the bulb, Sasquatch."

Truly, things around here just kept getting weirder and weirder. He could feel that his mouth was hanging open, but couldn't compose himself enough to close it. He was honestly surprised at the whole situation. First, that Leo had tracked him down to some random part of the ship just to guilt him into changing a light bulb. Second, Jason had, with his own eyes, seen Leo change this very bulb by standing on the counter before.

"What?" Leo asked, his gaze strangely intense.

Jason closed his mouth. Couldn't think of what to say. Didn't move.

Leo just watched him. It was unnerving.

He honest to gods jumped when the light bulb in his hands flickered on. He nearly dropped it, but saved it at the last minute. When he looked back up at his friend, Leo was grinning again.

"Cool trick."

Something about the flickering bulb tugged at a repressed memory. Clearly it was one from Vegas, and he was pretty sure it had something to do with his and Percy's first hotel room, the one they'd found flooded and without power. Whatever had happened there, he was obviously responsible for half of it but, like everything else, he couldn't recall exactly what went down that led to the resulting wreckage, although he could hazard a guess if he had to.

But did he want to, was the question.

No. No, because *that* made him think of what he and Percy were doing when they'd almost accidentally been thrown into a memory the first night back on the ship. What they *shouldn't* have been doing.

"Jason? Hey, are you alr-"

Jason turned, ignoring Leo's questions, and reached up to unscrew the blown bulb. Might as well get it over with, there was obviously no point arguing about it.

Just as he got the bulb about halfway unscrewed from the socket, the door in the kitchen opened.

"Yeah, but why do *I* have to do it?" Percy's annoyed, disembodied voice asked. "I'm not a fucking *plumber* , Grover."

Jason froze.

The clip clop of hooves accompanied Percy's voice. "I-I know, but Leo asked me to fix the sink and I don't know the first thing about it. I really don't want to disappoint him, he trusts me to fix it, so could you *please* help me?"

The spot Jason was standing in wasn't visible from the kitchen entrance yet so he figured now was the best time to make his escape. Leo could change the damn light himself.

Unfortunately for him, Leo had chosen to sidle up behind him, boxing him in against the counter.

There was a quiet moment, and then-

“Okay, alright, *fine.* I’ll take a look at it, but just because it has to do with water doesn’t mean I *automatically* know how to fix it.”

“Thank you,” Grover breathed in a sigh of relief.

“Mmmn,” Percy grunted. “So what happened that broke it in the first place?”

“Ah, uh, I think someone turned on the garbage disposal when there was a spoon in it. Wasn’t me, though.”

Jason could almost see the look of disbelief that had to be on Percy’s face in his mind.

There was a long pause, the sound of a cabinet door opening, and then some rustling.

“W- *a fucking spoon?!* Grover, this looks like someone straight up ripped the pipes out from under the sink with their bare hands!”

“It…was an Imperial Gold spoon? It exploded," Grover supplied unhelpfully.

Jason almost leaped out of his skin when Leo said loudly from right behind him, “Hey Grover, how’s that sink comin’?”

Grover’s bald head poked around the corner of the wall. His eyes slid right over Jason and went straight to Leo. "Oh hey, didn't see you there! Not quite sure yet, but I've got Percy helping me with it so it shouldn't take too long. What are you guys up to?"

"Jason offered to change this light bulb for me since I couldn’t reach it. How's it going up there by the way, Jason?"

He glared down at Leo, trapped against the counter still and unable to move. "Just fine," he gritted out from between clenched teeth.

Leo, the scheming bastard, smirked up at him. "Hey when you're done with that, you can help Percy fix the sink, can't you? I just remembered I need Grover for something else down in the engine room. It won't be too much trouble, right?"

The light bulb in Jason’s hand flickered angrily. "I was actually kind of in the middle of something before this, so-"

Leo tsk'd. "Doing what? Wearing a hole in my floorboards? Don't be a dick and make Percy fix the sink by himself, that's just rude."

"I…I didn't say that I *wouldn’t* help, I just-"

Percy wormed his way around Grover and butted in. "No, it's no trouble, I'll be fine by my-"

Leo clapped his hands together once, loudly. "Great! With both of you working on it, it should be done in no time! Come on, Grover, let's go. You two don't leave this kitchen until that sink is fixed, you hear me? I'm trusting you on this."

Grover scurried around the dividing wall and held the door open. Jason found himself being manhandled into the kitchen by a surprisingly strong Leo, who shoved him towards Percy and the sink.

With a stern look back at Jason, Leo gave him the *I'm watching you* fingers from the eyes gesture and slipped out the door.

An awkward silence fell over the kitchen, both him and Percy standing at opposite ends of the small space, trying to be as unnoticeable as possible.

The light bulb Jason was still holding buzzed loudly, got brighter, then popped and went dark. The glass didn't shatter, thankfully, but the filament inside was definitely burnt away.

With nothing better to do about it, Jason shoved the bulb into his pocket and pretended he didn’t notice Percy twitch at the pop.

The cabinet doors under the sink were still wide open, showcasing the pipes there. Or what was left of them.

"Good gods," he muttered in surprise. Percy was right, it *did* look like someone had just reached under the sink and tore the workings apart with their bare hands.

Or… *bear* hands.

It was a mark so small that it could've been mistaken for nothing but now that it caught Jason’s attention it looked eerily similar to the scratches Frank sometimes left behind when he was fighting in his bear form.

Five shallow lines marred the wooden backboard, directly behind the worst of the damage, as if he'd morphed his arm into a bear's and took a good swipe through the plumbing.

Strange Town, Stranger People

Chapter Notes

I was going to hold off on posting this one for a couple more days buuuuut it's Jason's birthday today 💙💙

A very happy birthday to that golden retriever, he deserves the world and I was hoping this story would be at the 'make up and make out' part by this day but unfortunately he gets a little more angst for a bit.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Percy's POV

"Good gods," Jason muttered next to him as he saw the wreckage.

Percy silently agreed.

Grover and Leo were crazy, there was nothing to fix here because nothing *could* be fixed. It would have to be replaced when they got back to camp.

But Percy knew Grover hadn't dragged him up here to fix a stupid sink. As soon as he heard Leo and Jason on the other side of the dividing wall his suspicions were confirmed. As well meaning as his best friend's intentions undoubtedly were, Percy would appreciate it if everyone would just kindly remove their noses from his business.

Everyone's not-so-subtle glances and poorly disguised attempts at 'helping' him were starting to get on his nerves. After that shadow

traveling bullshit Nico pulled the other day during the power outage, Percy had made an effort to disappear whenever possible.

The only problem? Jason seemed to be around every turn he took, as if fate were being especially cruel to them.

Percy kind of wished he still had Guido to talk to, regardless of the lobster's annoying habit of lecturing him on matters he didn't understand. The want had gotten so incessant that he'd gone to retrieve Guido out of his banishment the other night, only to find him gone. His first thought was to panic, wondering where his little friend had disappeared to, worried that something bad happened to him.

That is, until he noticed the little lobster shaped water splat on the floor and the subsequent scuttle pattern leading out of the bathroom. Guido must've made his escape when someone left the door open.

Percy had reached out with his mind but received nothing in return. Worried about Guido's gills drying out, Percy had followed the water droplets out of the bathroom, hoping they'd lead him to his friend like a little trail of breadcrumbs.

Relief swirled in his chest as he saw the watermarks veer towards the bedrooms and expected to find the lobster waiting outside his door.

To his chagrin, Guido's scuttle pattern went right past Percy's room and stopped at Jason's.

There had been no lobster there, but the water droplets were smeared across the floor, as if the door had recently opened and dragged them with it.

All of his worry turned to offense in less than a second. That little conniving, backstabbing traitor went and ran to Jason the first chance he got. Sure, Percy had exiled him to the bathroom for two days, but that didn't mean he didn't *care* for the little guy.

He'd reached out to Guido again, as a last resort, hands pressed silently against Jason's door, and this time the lobster responded. Kind of.

All he got was a brief rush of smug satisfaction from Guido and the words:

If you want me, you're going to have to come in here and get me. Your mate is very kind, I doubt he'd *evict me as heartlessly as you did, lord. I think I'll stay here with him from now on.*

Percy had resisted the urge to pound his fist on the door.

Guido, you little shit, get back out here right now.

The connection had once again gone dead.

Guido! Gui-

He'd paused to take a deep breath and try to calm his words.

Guido I'm sorry, okay. Please don't ignore me. I'm sorry I kicked you out, I was just mad. It won't happen again.

Nothing. Why did being snubbed by a lobster hurt so much?

Is this what his life had become?

…fine. Be that way. But know that if and when *your gills start drying out, I won't be there to-*

He didn't have the heart to finish his threat, because he honestly didn't wish ill on the little crustacean.

When… when your gills dry out and you need help you just have to ask for it, okay? I'll be here if you need me.

There had been a beat of silence, during which Percy thought he wouldn't hear anything, but as he turned to leave, he heard a quiet:

I don't think I'm *the one that needs you right now, lord.*

The comment had honestly floored him. He'd stopped in his tracks, worry leeching back into him, but this time it was worry for *Jason* . It had taken Percy a good couple of minutes arguing with himself before he finally unstuck his feet from the ground and retreated back to his own room.

He'd heard nothing from his lobster since then, but sometimes at night he could hear Jason speaking softly to Guido through the wall, but it was so hushed he could never make out actual words. It wasn't like Guido could communicate with Jason, but the fact that he idly spoke to the lobster despite that made a small, warm feeling bloom in his

chest. At least those two weren't lonely.

Now, as Percy stared at this obviously sabotaged sink, he missed having the freedom of easy conversation with his friend. Not only Guido, but Jason as well.

Too bad what was best for them was avoidance.

Percy inhaled sharply through his nose, opened the drawer next to him and pulled out a notepad, a sharpie, and some tape. He scrawled a note on the paper, closed the cabinet doors, and taped his note to the faucet.

Jason watched him warily the whole time, arms crossed, dead light bulb in his front pocket. If this situation had occurred at a time when things weren't so weird between them, Percy would have made a joke. *Is that a light bulb in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?*

He didn't dare make it now.

"There. Fixed." Percy announced to the wall instead, and then left without waiting to see Jason's reaction.

Leo would probably nag him incessantly about 'fixing' the sink by leaving a note that said: *OUT OF ORDER. DON'T USE.* But Percy could care less right now.

He got all the way to his newly favorite, recently discovered hiding spot before he heard the loudspeakers click on.

Great, he thought, *here comes Leo's wrath.*

" *Attention gentlemen and gentle-goats, this is your captain speaking. We will be making a planned,* non-emergency *descent here momentarily. Please do not freak out or break any more of my windows, thank you very much. We are in absolutely no danger, this is a simple supply run and- oh, hey Grover, what did you s-"*

The speakers cut out as Percy assumed Leo diverted his attention to whatever it was Grover interrupted him for. Despite Leo's sarcastic comments, Percy actually appreciated the warning before the ship started going down again.

The speakers clicked back on and Leo's irritated voice filtered through the ship again. "*Secondary announcement: It's come to my attention that the kitchen sink has not been repaired yet,*" he paused to heave a sigh, "*so please do not use it, as you will flood the ship if you do and, unlike Perseus and the lobster, we cannot breathe underwater.*" Leo sounded so very done with everyone towards the end of his announcement that Percy kinda felt bad for not even attempting to fix the sink, but then he remembered that it had probably been wrecked on purpose as a way to force him and Jason to work together and the guilty feeling went away.

" *In addition to that, we will be making touchdown on a lake, so be prepared for some unexpected turbulence as Festus engages the aquatic gear before landing. Announcements over."*

He felt the ship start to descend slowly as the loudspeakers clicked off for the final time. The change in altitude still made his stomach swoop but it wasn't nearly as bad as last time.

Percy stayed in his little secluded section of the ship until he heard the waters of whatever lake Leo had found lapping at the bottom of the

boat. The sound instantly calmed him, like a balm to a burn. Stress and anxiety fled from his body and left him exhausted, but content. He'd gotten better at flying over the years but he didn't think he'd ever be *used* to it.

He found the nearest window, aching for a glance at something other than clouds and high flying birds.

Percy had to admit, the scenery here was beautiful. The sun was just beginning to set over the distant mountain range and it cast a golden hue across the lazy surface of the lake they were floating on. It made him miss camp.

The hundreds of little minnows in the lake swarmed around the boat, sensing his presence, wanting to say hi. They were simple little things, not very cognitive, but the enthusiasm and encompassing love they radiated brought a rare smile to his face. He reached out and connected to the swarm, letting his thoughts get carried away with them for a while, feeling like part of the shoal as they brimmed with happiness at being acknowledged.

There were times like this where Percy felt truly blessed to be fathered by Poseidon.

"-cy! Hey, Percy!"

Percy blinked, zoning back into his surroundings as he extradited his consciousness from the fish.

He blinked again, finally aware of the hand waving in front of his face.

Will must've noticed he'd refocused, because his hand dropped back to his side and his worried face replaced it.

"Hey, you alright? You weren't, uh, in a memory were you?"

Percy shook his head and backed away from the window. "No, sorry, just…talking to the fish."

"Oh," Will breathed, sounding more at ease. "They got anything interesting to say?"

"Just current events."

Will laughed, startled at his unexpected joke. "Good to know."

Percy hummed. "So what did you need? But I'm warning you, if it's about the sink, you can just leave now, I'm not fixing it."

"Nah, I just came to tell you a few of us are heading into the nearby town to restock on some supplies. Wanted to know if you planned on tagging along."

Gods, Percy would do just about anything to get some fresh air right about now.

Still, he hesitated to answer, and Will must've noticed because he said, "Jason's not coming. Nico already asked him."

Percy gave him a grateful smile. "Yeah, I'll go. It'd be nice to get off this ship for a bit."

The reason Leo chose this location as their restocking stop became clear once Nico had shadow traveled everyone that was going on the outing to shore.

The little sleepy town next to the lake was home to a very important looking truckstop.

"I need about seventeen gallons of fifteen weight fourty oil and this is the closest place to us that has a chance of having that much," Leo explained to the group trailing after him, which consisted of Nico, Will, Percy, and Frank. "The trick is going to be whether or not they're willing to part with it."

Turns out the actual trick would be finding a time when the place was open.

"Closed for the holiday weekend?!" Leo exclaimed to the security guard at the front door to the building. "What *holiday* ?"

The guard looked at him like he'd grown a second head. "Um, today is Father's Day. Most every business is closed for the weekend in observation of it. If you need to, the rest stop is still open, you can bring your Semi around and park it there for the weekend. The shop will be open again on Monday, you can refill your oil then."

"Father's Day," Leo repeated weakly. "O-Oh, of course, how could I have forgotten. Silly me."

The guard shifted uncomfortably on his feet. "Uh, easy mistake, I guess. Listen, you all should call your dads if you haven't already. I'm sure they'd appreciate it. Just maybe don't tell them you forgot what day it is."

The irony of that statement was lost entirely on this mortal human.

Although, being told to phone up the underwater palace just to wish Poseidon, God of the Seas, a happy Father's Day was now definitely on Percy's top ten funniest things list. Maybe he'd do it next year.

"Or," the guard continued, "there's a little gas station about a mile and a half that way that's open a day earlier than the truckstop. They might have some of the oil you're looking for, because there's no guarantee the stop'll have everything you need."

"Ah," Leo said, following the line of the guard's finger where it pointed down the winding road to the left of them. "A day earlier, you say?"

The guard nodded. "Yeah it'll be open Monday. Truckstop won't be till Tuesday. I wish you all the best of luck, but I've gotta get going on my rounds or the boss will be calling me up any second now. Take care."

Leo watched the guard get back in his ATV and drive off, hands on his hips.

"We could always just find another town to buy oil at." Percy suggested.

"No, we can't," Leo announced as he turned back to the group. "Festus will burn through what little oil he has left just trying to get back up

to altitude and if that happens the backup engines would fry too. Then we'd never get home."

Nico kicked at a pebble and sent it flying off over the nearby field. "So we'll wait till Monday," he said when the rock had skittered out of sight. "Stay on the lake. It’s the only thing we can do."

Percy didn't say anything, painfully aware that he'd complained enough about the delays over the last few days. What was a few more.

Surprisingly, it was Frank who made an objection to the idea. "I'm not so sure that's a good plan, guys. We're pretty much monster bait just sitting out on the lake like that. This town isn't nearly as easy to blend in with as Vegas was. There's too much open space here, it's almost a guarantee we'll be attacked at some point."

Nico shrugged, like the impending certainty of a monster attack didn't bother him in the least. "I'm pretty confident we could take anything that came at us. Plus, we're camping out on a lake, if anything tried to bother us Percy could just drown it. Right, Percy?" Nico asked, walking past him and nudging him harshly with his boney elbow.

" *Sure* ," he grumbled, rubbing at the sore spot blooming on his arm.

"That's the spirit," Leo said brightly as he trailed off after Nico and Will back towards the ship. "Come on, Frank! Let’s get back and tell the others the news."

Frank still seemed unsure, saying, "I'd still rather not have to fight anything," but he ended up giving in and set off after the others anyways.

Percy had nothing else to do but follow and try to enjoy the fresh afternoon air for as long as he could.

The walk back to the ship was spent in relative silence, at least for Percy. The others chatted incessantly about seemingly everything and anything under the sun, including their surroundings. The town they had to walk through was very small, but obviously a close knit community. The few people they encountered were friendly enough, but it was clear they knew this little group didn't belong here.

Not feeling particularly chatty, Percy let his eyes wander around the buildings they passed, trying to figure out the name of this truckstop town. Eventually he discovered it from the general store, which was conveniently named ' *MISTY SPRINGS GEN GOODS'.* The little cursive writing underneath that took him a bit to decipher because the red paint was faded and flaking but after squinting at it for a second for two he made out *'Family owned since 1865!'.*

"Eighteen sixty five?" He muttered under his breath, slowing to a stop in front of the old log cabin esque building, its sagging front porch the only thing betraying its apparent age.

He didn't realize the others had stopped as well until Will spoke.

"Wow, do you really think this store has been in the same family for over a hundred years?" He asked, impressed.

Frank’s eyes darted around, like a cornered animal, at the similarly aging buildings around them. He sidled closer to Leo, his height casting a protective shadow over the smaller man. "I don't know, but I'm getting a weird feeling about this town. Anyone else feel it? It's like…like we aren't supposed to be here."

Leo snorted and craned his head upwards to look at Frank. "Place is just old, that's all. These backwoods towns are steeped in generational families, there's nothing weird about it."

Will nodded along with Leo. "Yeah, some family back in sixty five probably gave up on trying to trek the whole Oregon Trail and settled down here. Most likely established this town and from then it just kinda grew." He gave the small town a quick once over. "Obviously it didn't grow much, but hey, that's the charm of places like this."

Percy agreed with Frank. There was something wrong about this town, like underneath the quaint exterior lurked a dark secret.

"No, I think Frank's right," Percy said. "We shouldn't linger here anymore than we have to." He paused for a second as a strange scent wafted towards him. "And it smells weird," he added.

Nico clicked his tongue. "You guys are too superstitious. It's just a rinky dink truckstop town. The only weird thing here is us standing here staring at the store while the owner watches us from the window."

Percy hadn't noticed anyone at first, but on closer inspection, he could indeed see an older woman with dark hair streaked through with grey watching them. Her piercing eyes set the hairs on the back of his neck on end.

"Okay, creepy lady is the last straw, let’s get back to the ship," Percy blurted, taking charge and leading the group away. He wasn't entirely sure, he could have imagined it, but as he turned he thought he saw the store owner smile at him, her jaw stretching entirely too wide and exposing a row of jagged, sharp teeth.

But when he chanced a glance back, the woman was smiling a normal, pleasant smile at him and gave a polite little wave which he did not return.

Just his mind playing tricks on him. He hoped.

The mood of the group was somewhat subdued for the rest of the journey back, and nothing else strange happened. However, as about the fifth car passed them, something clicked in Percy's head. All the license plates were from Wyoming.

He came to a dead stop, stumbling forward a little when Leo bumped into him.

"Dude, what the-"

Percy rounded on him. "What are we doing in *Wyoming,* Leo?! We should be in Missouri by now!"

Leo calmly pushed the accusatory finger away from his face and sighed. "Right, I forgot you didn't hear. Nav system went out a few days ago and Festus drifted pretty far north for a bit. No big deal, system is fixed now. Just a little hiccup."

A little hiccup that cost them three days worth of travel, apparently. He wanted to argue, wanted to be mad, and say his piece, but as he opened his mouth to do just that he caught sight of the store owner again. This time she was on the sidewalk opposite them, simply standing there, her sharp eyes boring into him. An SUV drove between them and when it passed, she was gone.

Percy swallowed the lump of cold fear that bubbled in his throat.

"We're being followed, we need to leave."

Leo blinked, clearly not expecting that answer. He looked around and frowned. "No we're not, you're being paranoid, Percy."

Percy looked to Frank for backup. "You saw her too, right Frank?"

Frank lifted one shoulder halfheartedly. "Who? I haven't noticed anything. This place is strange, but I don't think we're being followed."

"Nico?" He asked, knowing that if something were lurking about then he'd probably be aware of it.

But Nico just raised his eyebrows and shared a look with Will.

"There's nothing there," Nico assured him.

They were wrong. How could they not *sense* it. It was as plain as the smell that permeated this town.

"Horses," Percy whispered to himself. "That's what that smell is."

The others were looking at him like he'd gone crazy, but he *wasn't.* He knew that smell.

Percy spun a quick circle, desperately searching for signs of a stable nearby, but knowing there wasn't.

"Did anyone see any horses in town?"

Will laid a gentle hand on his shoulder and Percy jumped at the contact, his hand instinctively reaching for his pen. Will took a wary step back.

"Woah, hey, it's just me. I've got too many unwanted piercings lately, I don't need another," Will joked, forcing out a stiff laugh.

Nico narrowed his eyes at Percy, his own hand settling on the hilt of his sword. "Come on, Crazy. Let's get back to the ship before you go all *Shining* on us, yeah?" He prompted with a firm nod in the direction the ship was waiting.

"But-"

"Come on, Percy. There's no one following us. The others are probably getting worried that we're taking so long," Frank told him calmly, but his actions were anything but. He got closer to Leo, one of his hands hovering around Leo's lower back, as if he were prepared to grab him and take off to safety at the first sign of trouble.

Percy bit his tongue to stay quiet. Frank *did* feel something off. But why was he being so mellow about this? Usually he'd be right there by Percy's side, scanning for danger.

If Jason was here, he'd-

Percy didn't realize he said that last part out loud until he saw the smirk march across Leo’s face.

"Would that make you feel better?" Leo asked. "If Jason was here would you calm down on the psycho tendencies? We can go back and get him if you want. I'm sure he'd take a look around town with you if you asked. You know, I even saw a little ice cream shop a few blocks back-"

Percy was already stomping away from them, his pen shoved back in his pocket.

This wasn't a *joke* . Percy knew what he saw. Leo's barbs aside, Jason *would* believe him and he *would* hunt down whatever was stalking them with him.

The Jason-shaped hole in his chest ached for its missing piece.

He heard the scuffling of the others following after him but didn't wait for them to catch up, staying a few steps ahead of the group. He wrapped his arms around himself, feeling the chill in the air as the sun slipped the rest of the way behind the mountains. It was going to be a cold night, and he had no excessively warm blond man to steal heat from.

Fuck, he didn’t even have a *lobster* to talk to. It was going to be a long night.

“I’ll take first watch,” Percy offered after they’d gotten back to the ship and told the rest about the updated plan.

Jason's hands tightened visibly where they gripped the table top. "We should do watches in pairs, it's safer that way," he said to the group at large. "Especially the night watch," Jason added.

"There's nothing wrong with this town," Leo huffed. "I doubt we'll even need a watch to begin with."

Frank pursed his lips. "The town might not be a threat but we don't know what kind of monsters are in the area. It's better to be safe than sorry. If you wake me up halfway through the night, I'll take over for you, Percy."

Percy nodded his thanks at Frank. "I don't really need anyone to double up with me, though. I'll be fine. It's not like anything could sneak up on me out here."

Jason's jaw tensed and he stood up straight, crossing his arms over his broad chest. "We *always* do watches in pairs. No matter wh-"

Percy bristled. "I said it's *fine.* "

Jason looked like he wanted to argue, but didn't say anything more.

"I'll wake you up around two, Frank." Percy said, then went to find a comfortable place on deck to settle in for the night.

He ended up feeling too restless to sit, so he leaned against the railing and let his eyes wander across the darkening landscape.

The sound of a door opening made him look over his shoulder, wondering if Jason ignored him and had come up here to sit in awkward silence with him, but it turned out it was just Coach Hedge. The satyr made his way over and leaned on the railing next to him.

"What's up, Coach?"

Hedge didn't answer for a bit, his gaze turned upwards at the stars. Eventually, he let it fall on Percy. "Hey, kid. Just came up here to check in before I went to sleep. Wanted to make sure you were alright and everything."

"Oh," Percy said, surprised. "Yeah, I'm okay. I think I'm just a little on edge, this town is weird and I'm pretty sure the local store owner is some kind of demon or something."

"Hmm. That's not what I meant, and I think you know that." Hedge said gently. "I've been around, kid, I know misery when I see it. You wanna tell this old goat what's got you so unlike yourself?"

Percy scoffed, turning his face away so he didn't feel so scrutinized.

"I think the better question would be what *isn't* causing me misery right now."

Coach hummed again and Percy heard him shuffle around some. "Wanna know what I think?"

"You're probably going to tell me whether I want you to or not," he

said sarcastically.

“I think you miss your friend.”

Percy dropped his head into his hands so he didn’t have to see Hedge’s face. “‘Course I do,” he admitted to the water below them.

“So talk to him,” Hedge suggested, as if that would solve all Percy’s problems.

“It isn’t that simple, Coach. Things are more complicated than…than just the fact that we got married. Talking isn’t going to fix what we-” Percy made himself stop, not wanting to offload everything that was welling up inside him.

Coach drummed his fingers on the railing as he waited for Percy to speak again, but when it became clear he wasn’t going to, Hedge said, “It can be, if you let it. Simple, that is.”

Percy laughed, a harsh, derisive sound that echoed around them in the night. “Thanks for trying to help, Coach, but I think you should go to bed now.”

“You think just because you got your feelings involved in this mess that means-”

Percy turned quickly, glaring down at the casually at ease satyr resting beside him. “I don’t *have* feelings for-”

“Oh, is it lies we’re telling tonight?” Coach challenged, his eyes narrowing and fixing him to the spot. “I’ve spent the last few days watching you two run away from each other like immature little kids on the schoolyard, and I’ve spent the last few years before that watching you two be as close as conjoined twins, so whatever happened between you and Jason obviously had to involve feelings. Whether those be platonic or romantic doesn’t really matter much in the grand scheme of things, if you ask me.” Hedge slowly pushed himself into a standing position and brushed the wrinkles out of his shirt. “You want to ruin everything you’ve built with him? If the answer to that is ‘yes’, well then keep doing what you have been. Just some food for thought while you brood up here all night by your lonesome.”

Anything Percy had to say in that moment would’ve either been filled with venom or absolute bullshit, so he chose to say nothing at all.

Hedge gave him a stern look before he left and said, “Whatever you do is ultimately up to you two. I won’t pretend to know everything that’s going on, but I do know that if I have to spend another week watching you cram yourself into broom cupboards or Jason slip out a window and fly to the other side of the ship just to get away from each other then I’m going to lose my damn mind. You’re an adult, Percy, so act like one.”

With those words of harsh wisdom, Coach Hedge stomped down the stairs, banging the door shut behind him.

He wanted to be mad, and he sort of was, but he’d just been dressed down and chastised by someone who very much had the air of an irresponsible uncle so Percy also felt cut down to size. Hedge was so serious, it was almost scary. He’d never really had a respected father figure tell him off before and it was certainly not fun.

He turned Hedge’s words over in his mind as he settled against the side of the ship again to keep watch for danger. It was truly dark now,

a thick fog rolling in from the shadows.

Percy *would* talk to Jason, but…after he talked to Annabeth first. He needed answers and everywhere he turned all he got was more questions. He *needed* to talk to Annabeth about that conversation they'd apparently had before he sorted everything out. Plus…

He didn't trust himself around Jason. If past experiences were anything to go by, then he and Jason in a room alone together spelled anything *but* conversation. Percy didn't understand it, they acted like horny teenagers every chance they got, but at the same time…it was more than that.

Jason made his heart race, made his skin feel hot and prickly, and his lungs ache for breath, even when he had no trouble getting oxygen. As if he were allergic to him or his body forgot how to perform its most basic functions around him. He-

He'd have to think about this later.

The fog crept slowly towards the *Argo II* , but something about it was unnatural. The color too bright, the direction too precise. Every alarm bell in his head went off, the lake around them becoming still as glass, but he felt nothing out of place within it. He scanned the shore as best he could through the thick, eerie fog, but didn't see anything.

There was movement to his left and it drew his attention to a small section of shore where the mist seemed to retreat and create a hollow, in which he could just make out the sand.

He blinked and then it was there, but it wasn't the store keeper like he'd expected.

There on the naked beach stood a pure white horse.

No. Something wasn't right about that creature, he could feel it in his very bones. Whatever that thing was, it wasn’t a horse. It stood too still, staring him down from across the water.

Percy didn’t move, forced himself not to blink. He didn’t dare even reach into his pocket for his sword, something primal in his brain telling him that if he did, the thing on the beach would kill him.

He tried to breathe evenly, waiting for something to happen. The water around him seemed suddenly wrong, like a hostile entity, so very different from how it felt this afternoon.

The horse on the shore moved unexpectedly and Percy almost jumped out his skin. The creature trotted sideways, giving him a full length view of its massive body, like it wanted him to pay close attention to it. Slowly, it lifted its front right hoof, the one closest to the water, up off the ground then it paused again, making sure Percy saw what it was about to do.

After a beat, the creature took a step forward, its raised hoof gingerly touching the ground before quickly lifting it again. The horse continued on for a few more steps, limping every time like an injured animal.

Did…did it want help?

Unbidden to him, a wave of concern flooded through him and he wanted nothing more than to jump into the unfriendly waters below and help the horse as best he could.

It looked really nice too, maybe it would even let him ride it? It's been a while since he rode and he kind of missed the calm it brought him.

He bet that horse was a good swimmer, most horses were.

It could take him for a swim under the lake. That could be fun.

He'd really like that, yeah.

It wouldn't even be hard to get to, he could just walk across the water, right to it. He could-

Percy blinked, feeling the spell that had come over him shatter. He stumbled back, fumbling for his sword.

A voice that sounded like water bubbling over a brook whispered in his mind.

What strength you have, horse lord. Although my kind have never been very successful with children like you, I'm afraid.

"Get out of my head," Percy growled. He didn't have to yell, his voice carried over the water perfectly fine.

The horse stopped its limping and turned again, and as it did it shimmered, growing smaller and more humanoid, until the store owner from before stood in its place.

“I knew you were following us. What do you want?”

The woman tilted her head curiously and took a step forward. Instead of her foot going under the water, it rested on top of it. She took another step and her other foot joined the first.

I want to keep my family safe, the voice said, *and your presence here threatens that.*

Percy swallowed. “Listen, we don’t want to cause any trouble. We’re just passing through, we’ll be leaving in a few days.”

That didn’t appear to reassure her because she started actively walking forward now, little ripples emanating across the water every time she put a foot down.

“Come on, lady, I’m not really in the mood for a fight right now. Don’t make me drown you in this lake,” he warned.

The woman paused and laughed at that. Not with the voice in his head, but out loud, the sound high pitched, almost a whinny.

Child, you could not drown me in this place no more than I could drown you. It’s not a fight I seek, on that I swear. I have no doubt you and your friends could kill me, but I don’t have any intentions to die tonight. I think my husband would be quite upset if I don’t come home in the morning.

“Then what is it that you want?” He asked again, gripping the hilt of Riptide a little tighter when she resumed walking.

He blinked again and when he reopened his eyes, she was gone, the surface of the lake smooth once more. Panic gripped him. Where did she go?

The scent of horses wafted around him, stronger than it was in town.

“How about a chat?” A voice said into his ear from behind him.

Percy whipped around, swinging his sword on instinct at the creature. She reacted quickly, her hand darting out to catch his wrist, stopping his arm with a grip surprisingly strong for a woman who looked about fifty.

“For someone who doesn’t want to fight, you sure know how to start one,” he grunted, struggling to get his wrist out of her grasp. This close he could see her eyes weren’t quite normal, the pupils ever so slightly diamond shaped.

“Would you have let me on board this ship if I had asked nicely?” She questioned. “Look at me. If I meant you harm, why would I not just stab you from behind instead of speaking to you? You’re the one that swung a sword at me.”

“You’re the one that tried to lure me under the water with your phony horse injury!” He exclaimed.

They tussled back and forth, her not willing to let his arm go and him trying desperately to free it.

“Can you blame me for trying? A group of god-spawn land in *my* lake, walk through *my* town with your weapons and your prying eyes, what did you expect me to do?”

“Whatever you are, you aren’t very good at it, lady.”

“Oh give me a break, I haven’t tried to drown someone in *forever.* Look, I- *would you just stop for a minute?!”* She screeched, throwing him backwards into the railing. “I don’t want to *fight you!* Would it make you feel better if I swore on your Styx?”

The question made him pause, and she took the opportunity to keep talking.

“I swear on the river Styx that I won’t try to kill you anymore,” she promised, her hands raised in front of her like *he* was the unknown threat in this situation. “I’m going to sit down very slowly, and I would appreciate it if you stopped pointing that thing in my face. I *just* want to talk.” True to her word, she slowly got down on the deck and sat with her legs folded over each other.

Percy watched her closely, his sword held at the ready. The woman didn’t move, keeping her hands up, and clearly visible.

Fuck, his trusting nature was going to get him in trouble one day, but this lady looked like she was genuinely telling the truth. He didn’t believe her swear on the Styx would prevent her from trying to kill him if she really wanted to, but the gesture was surprisingly wholesome.

Percy let his breath rush out of him in a huff, his sword dipping down ever so slightly. Nice monsters confused the hell out of him sometimes.

He warily sat down across from her, Riptide laid across his lap just in case.

"Okay, so what's the deal then with the creepy smile and the following us through town earlier?" He demanded.

She shrugged. "It's worked to scare people like you off in the past. It was worth the shot. I value mine and my family's lives here, we've been in this town for a *long* time, and I'm not about to be run out of it by a couple of heroes too big for their swords."

"Eighteen sixty five long?" He guessed, remembering the sign from the general store.

She beamed at him, her normal teeth flickering into sharp fangs for a split second. "That's right."

"What *are* you?"

The woman turned and looked out at the lights of the town flickering through the fog. "My kind has been called many things over the years. Kelpie, mostly, but sometimes Nixies, Colpachs, or sometimes just Demon. I'm tied to this lake like your nature spirits are tied to their respective resources."

Something tugged at his memory, an old story he'd come across at some point or another. "Kelpies lure people in as horses and then drag them under water to kill and eat them. That's what you tried to do to me."

She rolled her eyes at him. “ *Tried* being the keyword there. And you’re missing a step by the way. It’s lure someone close, drag them under water to kill them, let their flesh rot for a week or two, *then* eat them. Otherwise there’s no flavor.”

He shifted his sword on his lap, making sure it was free to use at any moment. “Yeah, you’re *really* not winning yourself any points here, lady.”

“I told you, I haven’t done that in forever. My…well, my husband… I don’t like him to think of me as a monster, so I… Well let’s just say I’ve been the equivalent of a vegan for many *many* years now,” she informed him, her voice softening ever so slightly at the mention of her spouse.

“Your husband isn’t a Kelpie like you?”

“No, he’s not. He’s human. Or… *was* human, I guess. It’s a long story.”

Percy pretended to check his non-existent watch. “Well luckily I’ve got nothing but time right now.”

The Kelpie hummed thoughtfully, her strange eyes looking him up and down. “Okay, hero, I’ll tell you about my life in exchange for the safety of my family.”

“I already told you, we’re not here to cause trouble. But it’s a deal, if that makes you feel better.”

“It does.” She lowered her hands and rested them on her legs before continuing. “An abridged version of it is that I originally tried to kill

the man I ended up marrying. He was one of those pioneer settlers with big dreams of the open west back when this land was still being fought over. One night he camped by my lake here and I tried to do what my kind are known for, except for some reason he didn't fall for it like all the others. I'm not sure why, he isn't a descendant of Poseidon like you. Your siblings always seem to have an immunity of sorts to us. Probably because of the form we take."

Percy nodded along with her. "Yeah I knew you weren't a real horse the second I saw you. I still got a little…confused for a bit though."

"Yes, but if it counts for anything, you were *very* hard to hypnotize." She said it with begrudging respect coloring her tone, like she was impressed with him.

"Thanks?" He asked, unsure if it was a compliment or not.

She didn't acknowledge it. "Anyway, back to the story. He saw right through my disguise and still he tried to help me. He was very kind, thinking I was lost. Of course, I still could've dragged him in and drowned him but I just…I didn't. I let him go. He came back the next day, and the next, just waiting by the shore of this lake. Eventually, he started talking to me, bringing me little handmade gifts or meals. I still don't know why he chose me. I appear as a monster everytime he sees me, but he looks at me like-like I'm…not. Like I'm the most beautiful thing he's ever seen."

"Love is weird. You can't always explain it," he said, trying not to butt in but also feeling like he should say something.

"Hmmn," she hummed, "that's very similar to what he told me way back then. Not too long after that, he convinced me to let him stay with me. I live for so long, my biggest worry was that someday I'd have to watch the person I love wither and die, but so far? He's barely

aged a few years in the hundred and something we've been together. We're not sure, but we think it has to do with him constantly being in my presence. We've never come across a coupling like ours before, so everything is just guesses at this point. We're content with that though. Content with having the life we get to have…" She trailed off, a wistful look on her face.

Percy was actually kind of touched by this lady's story, relieved that he believed her. She wasn't the only friendly monster he'd ever met, and she probably wouldn't be the last.

He found himself a lot more relaxed than he had been at the start of the night, which was odd considering what was sitting across from him, but he was strangely glad that he got the chance to meet this woman.

She sighed. "Are you thirsty?"

"Is this another attempt at drowning me?" He countered, half joking.

The Kelpie laughed, her eyes crinkling up at the corners in delight. "You're a funny one. No, it was a genuine question," she said, shuffling around some so that she could reach into her pocket. He tensed, ready for anything, but to his astonishment she proceeded to pull out two bottles of coca cola. The actual glass bottles, old fashioned style.

She offered one to him.

"Go on, it's not poisonous," she teased, popping the cap off with her bare hands.

“How did you-”

“Magic,” she said mysteriously.

He hesitated, wondering at the odds of him dying from magically conjured cola. The last time he drank a suspicious drink things didn’t turn out so well.

He ended up taking it.

It tasted fine, nothing off about it, and they both sipped their cokes in the silence of the night.

“So,” she started a few minutes later, “what’s your story?”

Percy laughed. “Oh man, we definitely don’t have time for *that* .”

“A long one, too?” She asked, a wry smile tugging at her lips.

“Yeah, you could say that,” he muttered, taking another drink of soda.

“I bet.”

He looked at her oddly. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

She raised an eyebrow at his question. “You’re a sea god spawn who

reeks of ozone. You try telling me there's not an interesting story there."

Percy's eyes flicked down to where his wedding ring was resting against the glass in his hand.

"Ah," she said, following his sight. "You married someone unexpected, like I did. Some air spirit perhaps?"

"Little more complicated than that, actually," he told her bitterly, tapping his ring on the glass. The tinking it made was pleasantly rhythmic.

"Not a happy marriage, then?" She asked.

"Just…unexpected, like you said. He's not a spirit, he's, uh, a son of Jupiter."

Her face lit up in surprise, clearly taken aback by that. "Oh my, what a strange pair. I'm not too involved in gods and god-spawn affairs but I can assume that this is something that's very rarely seen."

Percy had to laugh at that, for the simple fact that the reason this was so complicated wasn't to do with their fathers being who they were but rather something completely different.

"That's not the issue, trust me. The catch is that he was my close friend, and we *accidentally* got married a few nights ago but don't remember any of it."

“Was?” She asked gently.

“Is, I guess. I think. Like I said, complicated. We’re not really speaking right now.”

She tsked, slipping her empty bottle back inside her pocket. “Sounds like it could just be a funny story to tell your friends. Why let it ruin your relationship with him?”

“Ah, well, the thing is, I’m not so sure our girlfriends are going to find it that funny. It’s kind of a permanent situation.”

“I…can see why that would throw a wrench in some things. I just hope it works out the way you want it to.”

Percy set his bottle down and clenched his fists, closing his eyes. “Problem is, I don’t *know* how I want them to work out,” he admitted quietly.

The woman watched him, her abnormal pupils wide in the darkness. Her irises caught the light of the moon every now and then, the rods there reflecting it back like a cat’s. “Sounds like you’ve got some thinking to do, hero. The best advice I can give you is to do what your heart thinks is best. It’ll steer you in the right direction,” she said after a while.

"It did for me,” she added softly.

“Thanks, Vegan Kelpie. I’ll figure it out, it’ll just take me some time.”

She giggled at the nickname. “It’s Kelsie, actually.”

“Kelsie the Kelpie?” He repeated, sure she was messing with him.

“Ironic, I know. My husband thought it was hilarious.”

“Well… I'm Percy,” he offered, sticking out his hand for her to shake.

“Nice to meet you, Percy,” she said as she grasped it. “I’m glad I didn’t have to kill you.”

“Same here,” he said truthfully.

She released him and got to her feet. “I should be going now. You and your friends are welcome in the town anytime you want, no one should give you any trouble. And the other monsters usually stay away from my territory so you won't have to worry about them either.”

“Thanks,” he said, standing up as well. “The others didn’t believe me about you anyway, so I doubt they’ll give you any trouble but if they try I’ll stop them. Oh, hey before you go I wanted to ask, is there any way we could get into the truckstop shop before Tuesday? All we’re here for is oil for the ship, once we get that we’ll be on our way.”

Kelsie shook her head apologetically. “No, sorry. Unfortunately that’s owned by some big corporation, not us. The person that runs it doesn’t live here and only comes into town when he has to work.”

“Ah, it’s no problem, just figured I’d ask. We’ll wait till then.”

Kelsie bid him goodbye and the next time he blinked, she was gone, reappearing on the shore again, the ghastly fog dissipating around her rapidly. She gave a jaunty little wave, which he returned this time, then walked off towards the town.

Percy watched her until she disappeared into the night, then checked the time. It was a little after two am, so he reached down, picked up his coke bottle, and went to wake Frank up for his undoubtedly uneventful watch.

Chapter End Notes

> I was going to hold off on posting this one for a couple more days buuuuut it's Jason’s birthday today 💙💙
>
> A very happy birthday to that golden retriever, he deserves the world and I was hoping this story would be at the 'make up and make out' part by this day but unfortunately he gets a little more angst for a bit.

A Dream And A Sticky Situation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Jason's POV

Percy may have insisted on doing his night watch alone but that didn't mean Jason would actually *let* him.

He tried to stay awake, a rotten pit of worry eating away at his insides as he sat alone in his room - window open, sword across his knees - listening for anything that might creep up on them.

Which is why he accidentally overheard the stern lecture Hedge gave Percy before going to bed.

And Percy's quietly admitted "'Course I do," when Hedge told Percy he thought he missed him.

The rest of Hedge's words were sharp and harsh, a slap of reality in the form of an outsider's point of view. And while the coach *did* express his irritation at the situation, Jason simply didn't understand why he and the others didn't hate him and Percy for what they'd done. The consequences of their actions didn't end where their friends began, because the truth was they were all too close knit for something like this to *not* affect every one of them.

Jason wondered if that fact had occurred to them yet. If it had, they

certainly wouldn't be trying to push him and Percy together in an attempt at patching up their crumbling friendship. There was no solution to the problem they'd created. So many lines had been crossed he couldn't even keep track of them all at this point.

"What do you think, little guy?" Jason asked the lobster that was splashing around happily in the large bowl of water he had placed on his bedside table for him the night he'd opened his door to the creature's soft tapping.

Guido paused his antics and scuttled up the side of the bowl, hooking his pincers under the outside rim so he could stabilize himself while he peered at Jason with his jet black eyes. The intelligence behind those eyes spoke vast volumes about the words he could not say.

Like the past few nights, Guido made no noise, only waved his feelers around and flexed his pincers like he was trying to communicate through some hybrid form of sign language Jason didn't understand.

"Do you think Percy and I can stay friends after everything is over?" he asked the lobster, if for no reason other than to feel like he wasn't alone.

Guido rapidly tapped his left claw on the rim of the bowl, his smaller back feet splashing around in the water.

Jason sighed. "Yeah, that's what I was afraid you'd say." He had absolutely no clue what he was *actually* trying to say, but it made things easier for him to imagine he wasn't talking to a fucking lobster about his personal issues. "Hopefully it won't take the others too much longer to realize the same thing."

Guido stilled his movements, one of his eye stalks twitching minutely.

“I wish it didn’t have to be this way,” Jason whispered, a tightness crawling its way up his throat. “I don’t want to lose Percy, Guido. He’s my- he’s…I care about him. A lot.” He swallowed hard, blinking rapidly at the burning sensation assaulting his eyes.

The lobster tapped and clicked, but Jason refused to look at him again until he was sure he wasn’t going to cry.

“That’s just life I guess,” he mumbled. “ *My* life, at least. I think I might be cursed, Guido. Everything good I’ve ever had has left me at some point for one reason or another. It was only a matter of time before he did too, right? I don’t know why I expected anything different.”

This is what it’s come to , Jason thought, *feeling sorry for myself and making up conversations with a lobster in the middle of the night.*

“Maybe I should just leave. It’s not like I couldn’t get home by myself, and it’d probably make things easier on everyone else. Not quite sure where I would go, though. I suppose it doesn’t really matter, it’s not like there’s anything left for me back at-”

Guido made the first vocal sound he’d ever heard a lobster make. It was some kind of cross between a hiss and the noise of bubbles popping.

Surprised, Jason set his sword to the side and leaned closer to the bowl to get a better view of Guido, trying to make sure he wasn’t hurt.

“What’s wrong? Are you okay?” he asked concernedly.

Guido hissed at him again and flopped backwards, flipping his powerful tail in the process. Jason gasped as the wave of cold water hit him square in the face, drenching his hair and startling the fuck out of him. He flinched back instinctively, wiping water out of his eyes.

" *Why did you do that?* " he demanded once the shock had worn off.

The lobster was barely visible now, having sunk down enough that only his short eye stalks and twitching antenna protruded over the rim of the bowl.

Jason could have sworn he was glaring at him, despite the lack of eyelids.

"You…don't think I should leave?" he asked slowly.

Tap tap.

"Or you think I *should* leave?"

Guido hissed angrily at him again, the sound reverberating around inside the bowl.

Jason sheathed his sword and propped it up against the side of his table, taking off his wet shirt and replacing it with a dry one to lay down on his bed. He crossed his ankles, resting his head on top of his folded hands.

“Yeah. I don’t want to go either.”

Guido stared at him for a moment more, the rising moon glistening off his black eyes, giving him the appearance of having two white pupils, before dunking below the water and going still as he presumably fell asleep.

“Point taken,” he said to his empty room.

He laid there for a while after Hedge had stomped his way to his room and left Percy on deck by himself. It looked like it was going to be a quiet night after all, but he still wanted to stay awake. Just in case.

He *wanted* to stay awake, and he was having a relatively successful time of it. That is, until the fog rolled in. Eventually he had sat back up to watch the forest around them, if only for a change of scenery.

Which is when he noticed the mist creeping steadily over the surface of the water.

He thought he should be alarmed, no fog moved with that much clear intention, but the alertness never came. In place of that, it brought him peace. Calm. Relaxation.

He was so *tired* all of a sudden.

He *wanted* to stay awake and on guard so Percy didn’t have to do it by himself.

Instead, he fell asleep. And he dreamed.

His dreams didn't follow any rhyme or reason, they jumped from one subject to another like a frog in a swamp. First he was watching himself plead with Piper in what looked to be his cabin back at Camp Halfblood, their words garbled and movements sluggish. He wasn't sure what exactly they were arguing about but he had the distinct feeling that this was a *memory* and not something made up by his subconscious.

Piper turned to face him and as she did, the dream shifted. It blurred and morphed until he was standing in Percy's cabin instead, and it was Percy looking at him.

He'd been in this cabin many times before, but he *knew* this wasn't real because Percy had *never* looked at him like he was right now in this room.

Jason stood in the middle of the Poseidon Cabin, his thumbs hooked into the front pockets of his jeans, his outside demeanor cool and collected, but if not for the position of his hands he knew they'd be shaking.

Percy stood across from him, his back resting against the door. His head was tilted back, so it gave the appearance of Percy having to look down to see him, despite their actual height difference. Jason had never felt so short before.

"Why are we here, Jason?" Percy asked, his voice low and sultry, tinged with the promise of things to come.

Jason looked around, possibly for an answer, but found nothing except

Percy's room. "Wha- I don't…I don't know."

Percy cocked his head to the side, studying him intensely. "You should, you're the one that brought us here. You're the one that…" Percy trailed off as he pushed away from the door slowly. He took a step towards Jason, and then another, until he was so close he could smell the lingering scent of the ocean that always seemed to cling to his skin. "You want this, don't you?" It was said in the form of a question but it came across as more of a statement of facts.

Jason swallowed, his mouth suddenly dry. "What?" He asked.

Percy smiled crookedly, his green eyes twinkling in the low light. Jason jumped a bit when Percy lightly rested his palms on Jason's chest. "You want me," Percy clarified before gently pushing him backwards onto the bed.

Jason scrambled up the bed, unsure of what exactly was happening, and Percy followed him, walking closer with his knees on the bed. He crawled forwards until he was seated between Jason's open thighs, which he then laid his hands on.

"That's why we're here, isn't it?" Percy asked, slowly running his hands up Jason's thighs until his body hovered over him.

Jason panicked and grabbed Percy's wrists, holding his hands still where they rested on his abdomen. "Percy, wait, I- what about…what about Piper? Annabeth?"

Percy raised an eyebrow at him, like Jason had just repeated something that had already been said a million times. "Well, yeah. That's why we're here, Jason."

"Percy, please, I'm so confused, can you just tell me what's going on?"

Percy sighed heavily and sat back on his haunches, pulling his wrists out of his grip along the way.

"We're here because you don't know who you are." Percy said patiently. His eyes softened and he leaned down again until they were face to face. "You're trying so hard to figure it out, love, but I think you've known for a long time. You're just too conflicted about everything to let yourself admit it. You're too worried about everyone else's happiness that you've forgotten to save some for yourself."

Jason starred up into Percy's wide, earnest eyes. "I wish…I wish I knew what was happening, but I just don't." He whispered.

Percy didn't sit back this time, he just hovered there over him, studying his face. "You're so beautiful. I'm sure someone's told you that before, right?"

Flabbergasted, Jason tried to lean back to see him better, but the pillows behind his head prevented that. He felt his cheeks heat up with a furious blush.

"Why are you saying that to me?"

"Because you are. Because you deserve to hear it. You get to be happy in life too."

Jason cradled Percy's face in his hands gently and looked him in the eye, willing him to meet his gaze. "I am *happy," he said, slow and emphasized,*

trying to reassure him.

Percy's eyelids fluttered closed and the breath in his chest shuddered on its way out. "Are you trying to convince me of that, or yourself? You're content. That isn't the same thing," Percy whispered. "You…" he opened his eyes again, "you've always had a hard time finding where you belong."

Jason licked his dry lips nervously. "Where is all this coming from?" he asked instead of acknowledging what Percy said.

Percy's forehead scrunched up in confusion. "I don't know, you tell me. This is your *dream. I'm just a manifestation of your subconscious. Everything I'm saying to you is already in your head. You just needed a little help facing it. "*

"Seriously, what the fuck," Jason laughed nervously, looking side to side, trying find some sense to this fever dream.

"I want to kiss you."

Startled, Jason looked back up, only to find Percy's eyes fixed on his lips. Unconsciously, he licked them again. Percy's pupils dilated in response. "Um…"

"Can I kiss you?" Percy breathed, one of his hands coming up to smooth back Jason's hair, letting it trail down until he was cupping his face.

"I-"

“Do you want me to kiss you?”

“But…but Piper and-”

“Hey, just answer the question, okay? It’s going to be alright, just…” Percy’s thumb ghosted across his cheek to trace his bottom lip, the touch feather-light and electrifying, “tell me if you like this. That’s all you have to do.”

Jason drew in a ragged breath as Percy’s thumb moved over his lip again, pausing for just a split second as it came in contact with the miniscule scarring that lined up with the continuation on his top lip.

“So,” Percy whispered, “do you?”

“Y-Yes,” Jason admitted quietly.

Percy smiled at him, radiant and bright. “Okay, and what about this?” he asked as he leaned down so very slowly, slow enough to give Jason time to push him away if he didn't want this.

But he did. He did .

At the first press of his lips, Jason momentarily forgot how to breathe air, which, okay, is embarrassing as hell for someone who can literally control it, but it mattered little compared to the explosion of-of something *in his chest.*

Percy’s lips moved gently against his, tentatively, as if he was worried

Jason would get spooked and run if he went too fast.

He needn't have. Jason kissed him back, hesitant at first, and then with more confidence, one of his hands making its way up Percy's curved side, up over his muscular shoulder to tangle into his thick hair.

He could've stayed like that for hours, the warm, heavy press of Percy's body flush against his own, their lips making each other's acquaintance in a slow dance that Jason wasn't sure he knew all the steps to but was willing to learn.

Unfortunately it was over all too soon, and Percy was leaning back, taking his warmth with him. He didn't leave, just returned to his previous position of hovering over him.

"So," Percy grinned, his lips shiny and slightly red, "did you like that?"

Jason was too busy catching up on all the breathing he'd just missed out on to answer immediately. Percy let him take his time, patiently watching him.

After he didn't feel quite so light headed anymore, he was able to nod and say, "Yeah, yeah, I-I did."

Percy's smile never slackened. "Good," he said again. "Here's another one then: does it make your heart race when I-" Percy reached down and slipped a hand up under Jason's shirt, pushing the fabric up his body with the direction his hand was headed. When it reached his chest, Percy stopped, pressing his whole hand into the center, right over his heart, "-when I do this?" He finished.

As if in response to his question, Jason's heart did indeed pick up its pace,

even faster than it had been before, which he hadn't even thought possible. It thundered in his chest like the reverberations after a lightning strike.

"Mmmmnn, you don't have to answer that one," Percy chuckled quietly, voice deep and low, his thumb smoothing over his skin, leaving goosebumps in its wake. "I can feel it."

Jason tried to collect his thoughts, attempting to bring this conversation back into less dangerous territory.

"Percy."

"Hmn?" Percy asked, his attention focused on the designs his hand was tracing on Jason's chest.

"Percy, look at me." When Percy reluctantly tore his gaze away and did as Jason asked, he continued. "Why are we doing this? Please give me a straight answer this time."

Percy tilted his head to the side curiously. "Here, give me your hand." He said, not waiting for Jason's response as he removed it from his own waist and placed it over his heart instead. He pressed it there with both of his own. After a beat of silence, he asked, "What do you feel?"

Jason wasn't sure what answer Percy was looking for. "You?" He said, tilting the word up at the end in a clear question.

"You're technically not wrong. Be a little more specific though."

"Oh gods," Jason mumbled. "Percy just answer my-"

"Please, Jason? Humor me, okay?"

Jason sighed heavily, wishing he had all the answers so that this would be less confusing. "Your…chest?" He said, knowing that Percy wouldn't relent unless Jason played along.

"Yes. And?"

"Fucking- Percy I don't know what you want from me!"

Percy frowned, appearing disappointed with the way this conversation was turning out. He let Jason's hand go from his chest.

"Jason, I can only try to help you, I can't tell you something you don't know yourself. That isn't how this works. I'm sorry."

"Then how is it supposed to work? Please, enlighten me, because you seem to know a hell of a lot more about this than I do."

Percy shook his head sadly. "But that's the problem, you do *know. You're just not getting it."*

Jason could have sobbed in frustration. "What is there to *get?"*

"This is about you and Piper, remember?"

"W- what?! *Percy, you keep jumping from one subject to the next, I-I can't follow any of this." Jason covered his face with his hands and took a few deep breaths, trying to calm himself down.*

"Hey," Percy said. Jason felt him lean down, their chests almost flat against each other. Percy tapped a finger on the back of one of Jason's hands. "Hey, look at me."

Jason spread his fingers and peeped up through them, seeing Percy's concerned face inches away. "What?" He mumbled. "If you're not going to say anything helpful then I don't want to hear it."

Percy tsk'd. "Don't be mad, please. Here, maybe this will help…"

Percy shuffled around a bit. Jason watched him warily as he did so. He moved forward some more, straddling Jason's hips now instead of kneeling between his thighs.

"Percy, I-"

"Just- be quiet." He moved some more, presumably getting comfortable, before going still. "There, now- you have to look at me, Jason- tell me what you feel when I do this."

With the new positioning Percy had wiggled his way into, Jason fully expected things to turn heated once more, but Percy just sat there completely still. He was about to ask him what he was supposed to feel, being that nothing was happening, but before he could, he blinked. It was a split second thing, a normal blink, but when he opened his eyes again, it wasn't Percy sitting on him.

Piper smiled down shyly, one hand absently fiddling with a braid.

"P-Piper? What are you…where's Percy?" Jason rubbed at his eyes, but Piper didn't disappear.

She giggled at him instead of answering, and reached for one of his hands. He was too shocked to do really anything at this point, so he just watched with a numb sort of detachment as she gently turned and placed his hand on the swell of her breasts. She winked at him.

"Wha- What the fuuuuck," Jason whispered. This was one of the strangest dreams he'd ever experienced, and that was saying a lot coming from a demigod. "What the fuck. Piper, what the absolute fuck is going on right now?"

Piper pushed her chest outwards, pressing her breasts up into his palm more. Her free hand slowly crept up her chest and she hooked a finger under the strap of her tank top. She slid the strap down her shoulder and went for the next one.

"Piper!" Jason tried to pull his hand away, panic, sharp and encompassing, clawing unbidden up the back of his throat.

This was happening too fast. He wasn't prepared, usually he had more time to get in the right headspace, this wasn't-

Piper moved her hips, grinding her body downward into his in a clear hint of what she wanted.

The panic spiked sharper, dragging nausea along with it this time.

"Piper, let go!" He pulled a little harder and she finally released him, her body coming to a sudden stop.

She stared down at him, her hurt, wounded expression tugging guiltily at his conscience. He quickly grabbed her hands in his, running his thumb over the backs of them, trying to soothe her.

"Piper, Piper, I'm so sorry, I didn't-I didn't mean to yell, I- you just caught me off guard, I-" He broke off his rambling, sorry excuse for an apology when she suddenly hunched over, crowding into his space, her technicolor eyes burning into him.

"Uh, Pipes, are you-"

Piper spoke to him for the first time since she'd appeared. "See? I knew it. I knew *it. Jason this is exactly what I was talking about and you know it too. I'm just trying to get you to* see *."*

Oh fuck, not this cryptic, vague shit again.

Jason had never felt so bone tired in a dream before. If he wasn't careful he was going to give himself whiplash.

"When? When did you talk to me about this? Because I literally have no clue what's happening to me right now and I'd really *like someone to explain it."*

Piper frowned at him again and turned her head to the side, looking across Percy's room to where his own cabin lay a few yards away. He followed her gaze and was startled to find he could see straight into his cabin, as if Percy's wall was invisible.

Inside, he saw himself and Piper, like at the start of his dream. They looked to be arguing - or rather Piper looked to be pointing at him, talking slowly and sternly, while he just stood there awkwardly as she spoke.

"Well…right then, Jason. I- right before you left for the trip. You don't… you don't remember?" Her trembling voice asked.

The wall to Percy's cabin solidified, blocking their view. He looked at her again.

"I'm sorry. I-"

"You're always saying that. 'Sorry'. 'Sorry about this', or 'sorry about that'. Stop apologizing for things you can't control or you're going to be unhappy forever." Her eyes were wide, like she was trying to get him to understand the point she was making.

"I…thought you were mad that I didn't remember our conversation…"

Piper sighed and brushed a lock of hair out of her face. "I'm not mad, I'm sad. For you."

Jason struggled to sit up, propping his back against Percy's wall. Piper came with him, still seated in his lap.

"Sad for me? That doesn't make any sense, I'm the one that- that slept with someone else, you don't have any reason to- you should *be mad, you should be* so *pissed at me right now."*

She cocked her head to the side curiously, like the concept didn't quite register with her. "Do you want me to be mad at you?"

"No, I just…don't understand."

"Hmm."

"What-"

Piper leaned down and kissed him, a quick peck on the lips, then another. "I can't be mad at you. You don't deserve it. If anything it's you *who should be mad at* me. *I should've said something sooner, it- it was selfish of me. I hoped…"*

Jason reached up and tucked her small braid behind her ear as she bit her lip and wouldn't meet his eyes. "You hoped what, Piper?"

She leaned down and kissed him again, his cheek this time, and stayed there. He looked at her from the corner of his eye.

A striking sea green one stared back at him.

"I hoped you'd find yourself," Piper said in Percy's voice.

Jason couldn't help it, with all the fucked up mind games his brain was playing on him in this dream, this was the most psychotic one yet. He screamed and flinched backwards.

Piper-Percy smiled at him.

"You're so close, Jason," they said, both their voices melding together into a dissonant, nightmare inducing amalgamation. "Soon you'll see yourself the way we do."

" Jesus fucking Christ, what-"

Piper-Percy opened their mouth and screamed at him. "JASON!" But it was Leo's voice this time, and that certainly *didn't belong in* this *dream. "JASON HELP ME, PLEASE! HURRY! Oh my gods, you have to* HURRY!"

Jason sat bolt upright in bed, his body freezing cold, teeth chattering, huge, heaving gasps of air shredding through his lungs.

Bright mid-morning light streamed in through his still open window, also the source of the chill in the air. But that was strange, Jason *never* got cold, at least not to this extreme. Maybe it was his version of night sweats.

Night…chills. Or something.

"What the fuck was that dream?" Jason mumbled to himself, clutching his chest, trying to calm the jackhammer inside of it. He could still feel the phantom press of Percy's hand there.

He leaned over to check on Guido, who was already hooked on the side of his bowl. "Do you know what that was all about?" He asked.

Guido tapped rapidly on the edge of his bowl, but that was the only response he got. Which is what he expected. At least it wasn't a splash of water this time.

"You really think so?" He asked sarcastically. "Well, in that case-"

" *Jason!"* Leo's shrill screech echoed through the halls. " *Help!"*

Well, that explains Leo's voice in his dream.

Jason was on his feet before he even realized what he was doing, his feet pounding on the floors as he full on sprinted out of his room. He paused there, listening intently for sounds of commotion, fighting, yelling, anything.

" *Jason!"*

He ran in the direction of Leo's shout, the familiar path telling him Leo was down in the engine room again.

But…where was everybody else?

He expected everyone on the ship to be rushing to Leo's aid, but except for the occasional call for help, there was nothing but dead silence.

He'd have to figure that out later. He was approaching the half ajar door to the engine room. He barely paused to throw it open, taking the steps three at a time.

In hindsight, maybe he should have looked before he leaped.

By the time he realized the entire floor of the engine room was covered in nearly knee deep goo, it was already too late. He almost got out in time, managing to turn around and face the door before the opaque substance seemed to harden at every point it was touching him.

He grunted, tugging futility at his legs, but the goo was as good cemented to his skin and jeans.

"It's useless to struggle, Jason. It's motion activated. The more you move, the more it solidifies."

Jason raised his head slowly to where Leo's calm voice explained the mechanics of whatever the fuck he was stuck in. His friend clung to the wall, casually hanging onto some pipes without a care in the world.

"Wh- *Leo!?* Are you okay? What was all the screa- a-and the, what is this jelly?" He demanded, worry and the gut reaction to be on guard still plaguing him.

For the record, Leo did look abashed. Only slightly, but at least he tried.

"I'm sorry, man, but it had to be done. I didn't want it to be like this, but you've left me no choice." Leo shrugged, as if to say *hey, what can you do?* "Know that I'm doing this for your own good, so, uh, maybe don't kill me after all this is over. I *will* take thanks in the form of an Olive Garden gift card, though, so make a mental note of-"

"Leo. Let. Me. Go. *Now!"* He growled, anger, disbelief, and realization all crashing down on him at once. "Don't *fucking* do this, don't you *dare* , you don't know what you're doing, I-"

Leo ignored him and uncliped a large black walkie-talkie from his belt.

Kkcherrsht, "He's here, move to phase two. Undead Commander, this is Phoenix One, you're a go to take down the shadow-field around Edgy Aquaman. Over."

There was a feed of static and then,

Kkcherrsht, " *Damnit Leo, I told you we weren't doing the stupid nicknames,* " Nico's exasperated voice complained.

There was another stretch of silence before the walkie sounded again.

Kkcherrsht, " *Okay, field is down, he can hear you now. He's still sleeping so you'll have to yell pretty loud.* "

" *Leo* !" Jason tried again. "Leo, please, I am literally begging you to stop."

"I'm sorry, Jason, but…it has to be this way." Leo looked at him with pity.

Maybe that's what finally set him off. He tried to lunge again, this time towards Leo, but only succeeded in hardening the goo more.

" *No it doesn't,* " he snarled, angry sparks dancing down his arms. "Gods, just - *get over here and let me out!* "

"And get turned into an air-fried Leo? Nuh, uh, not happening." Leo turned his attention back to his walkie.

Kkcherrsht, "Wild Foxtrot, this is Phoenix One, you're authorized to engage phase three. Over."

From the doorway leading up the stairs Grover stepped out of the shadows. "Man, I'm right here, you don't have to walkie me."

Leo pouted at him. "Where's your sense of imagination, Grover?"

Grover rolled his eyes and turned to face the ascending stairs. He cupped his hands around his mouth like a megaphone and bleated.

Jason had heard of Grover's ability to call forth the Panic given to him by Pan himself, and thankfully this was not it. It was, however, very unsettling.

Now Jason never had to wonder what a dying goat sounded like.

After his long bleat was over, Grover continued with, " *Percy! I need your help!* "

Jason watched in growing disbelief as Grover pulled the same trick on Percy as Leo had on him.

It worked just as well too, he could already hear thundering footsteps echoing throughout the ship.

" *Help, help! Percy, pl-* "

"No! Percy, wait, it's a *trick* ! Don't-"

Leo shot him an irritated look and joined in on calling for help. It had the desired effect Leo was looking for, because between the three of them, it just sounded like a whole lot of yelling with interjected *help me's* and *Percy, please's.*

If anything, Percy's steps came faster now so Jason let his voice drop out of the equation as he could do nothing but watch this scheme go sideways.

For him, at least.

The second the sound of the door being thrown open clanged down the staircase, Grover turned and hopped elegantly onto a nearby table, then turned again and hopped towards Leo, who reached an arm out and caught him, pulling the satyr close enough that he could latch onto the same pipes Leo was.

"Percy, wait, no, no, no, no, Perc- *Percy stop!* " Jason yelled, holding his hands up in front of him as some meager form of protection as Percy took his first step into the mystery goop. It was in vain.

Just like it happened to him, Percy didn't see the new addition to the room. When his second foot hit the floor, he lost his balance and thankfully tried to steady himself with Riptide by stabbing it into the floorboards.

Un fortunately, due to the amount of force at which Percy thrust his sword with, the very moment it touched the goo the substance solidified around the tip, and the entire thing was yanked out of his hand.

Thus, leaving nothing stopping him from sliding right towards Jason.

Instincts told Jason to try and catch him, and damn his protective nature because he followed those instincts blindly, and without question.

Percy slid into his front right as Jason opened his arms to grab him.

The result was chaotic at best.

The motion of them colliding kicked up an ungodsly amount of the goop, which seemed almost too happy to cling to whatever part of them it landed on.

Percy’s arms ended up looped around Jason’s neck, his chest and shirt

stuck firm against Jason's as the goop hardened almost the second they touched.

Jason's hands were stuck on either side of Percy's waist where he tried to catch him, and one of his thighs was slotted directly between both of Percy's.

They stared in horror at each other as the reality of the situation kicked all the way in. Percy seemed to immediately understand he'd been tricked into this, because his narrowed eyes searched the room until they landed on Leo and Grover clung to the wall.

" *You two!* What the fuck-why the fuck-how did you- *What is this shit!?* " Percy stuttered out angrily. Jason felt the entire ship rock with the force of it as the lake they were on responded to his emotions.

Leo and Grover shared a long look before Leo explained, "It's a new tactical item I've been working on. Don't worry, it's not permanent. Now you guys just *stick* around here for a while and work out your issues, Grover and I have a meeting to get to." Leo reached up and banged his fist on part of the wall.

The section, which until now seemed completely solid, was pulled back as a camouflaged tunnel entryway opened up. Frank's bashful face appeared and he lent a helping hand to Grover, pulling him up and into the tunnel before reaching back down for Leo.

That little shit wouldn't even look at him and Percy.

Leo, yes, Jason had to admit would pull something as asinine as this. Grover? He expected better from, but if Leo had convinced him it was for Percy's good, then he could've been persuaded.

But *Frank?* Frank, who is in an honorable position of leadership in the *Roman Army* ? Responsible, kind hearted, wholesome Frank?

No. The betrayal was too much.

Percy apparently thought so too.

"F-Frank?" He asked. "Frank, how could you? Don't do this, please don't, look I-"

Frank finally made eye contact with them. "I'm sorry, Percy, I really am, but this *is* for your own good."

And with that, he lifted Leo up as easily as if he weighed nothing more than a loaf of bread, shutting the door behind them. A resounding *clank* alerted them to the fact that there was most definitely a heavy-duty lock on the other side of that hidden door.

For a second they just stood there, glaring at the now unnoticeable hatch their *friends* had disappeared into.

Eventually the elephant in the room became too large to ignore, and they both slowly turned to look at eachother. There was almost no empty space between them. The goop had glued them front to front.

They were so close Jason could feel the warm little puffs of air Percy’s breaths made as they encountered his neck.

"Well," Jason said, "I mean, at least things can't get any worse."

Percy gave him an exasperated look right before the main lights clicked off, leaving them in such a low lit space he could barely make out anything past Percy's face.

He felt Percy's chest expand in a barely contained sigh.

"You just…had to say that, didn't you?"

Chapter End Notes

- 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾 Leo better have a good place to hide when those two figure out how to get free

Dance, Dance, Remember

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Leo's POV

The plan went off without a hitch. It was beautiful, really, the way every little piece fell into place just as he'd predicted. Now he had two very *very* angry proverbial flies caught in his honey pot.

The sense of satisfaction he got from that was marred only by the very real possibility of him being the target for the flies' wrath once they figured out how to get out of there. Hopefully by the time that happened those two would have made up and that would surely dampen their anger towards him. Surely.

In fact, they might even *thank* him, after all-

He should stop kidding himself. Leo was dead meat, a walking corpse, one foot in the grave and one in his mouth.

He sighed as he walked through the secret tunnel, Frank and Grover tagging along behind him. He felt the almost imperceptible brush of Frank's hand against his as they turned a corner and it made him feel marginally better. At least Frank would be right next to him, whatever the outcome.

Obviously Leo didn't think Percy and Jason would do him actual

physical harm, they just weren't those kinds of people, but he knew they'd get some form of revenge against him for what he'd orchestrated. Having Frank next to him made that certainty seem a little less daunting.

He took a peek over his shoulder at his friend, noting the guilty downcast of his eyes, the nervous tic he had of biting his bottom lip when he was stressed.

Frank must have felt his eyes on him. He looked up from his feet, his mouth tilting up into a gentle smile that for some reason made Leo feel like his skin had suddenly burst into flame without his permission. He scratched an imaginary itch on his cheek just to make sure that hadn't actually happened, but other than a rise in surface temperature there was no flame.

"You alright? You look a little anxious. If you're worried about them, don't. They'll get over it." Frank said, ducking to prevent his head from hitting a pipe.

Leo took in Frank's hunched over figure, crouched almost into a crawl just to fit through the small tunnel that had only ever been intended for Leo's use. It was an amusing sight to see, despite the tension in the air. Leo felt his lips tugg up in the corner against his will and returned to looking forward.

"Yeah, I'll be fine. Mostly just thinking about all the grey hairs I'll have after everything is over. And I thought saving the world was hard." Leo snorted. "Getting them to play nice is like giving a cat a bath. Very worth it in the end, but during it your life is flashing before your eyes."

Frank's deep laughter echoed around him in the small tunnel. "You're so dramatic, Leo. I promise I don't see any grey hair from here. But if

it does happen you could always dye it cool colors."

"That's true. I'll need someone to help me though. Can't very well see the back of my head, can I? Unless you're offering, I don't think it'll happen."

He heard Frank suck air in through his teeth. "Oh man, I'll have to check my calendar, I'm pretty busy that day. I may be able to clear up some space though, who knows?" He could also hear the smile in his voice.

"Aw, just for me? How sweet of you, truly a selfless leader."

From the back of the pack Grover cleared his throat awkwardly and said, "So, uh, sorry to butt in here, but we need to start thinking of the next step in this plan. If there even is one, that is."

Leo startled a little, somewhat forgetting Grover's presence with them. "No, this was pretty much it. Everything else is kinda up to them. They've got their own personal stuff to work out. Best we can do is wait." They were coming up on the exit to the tunnel now and Leo paused to unlock and swing the door open. "And we should wait in here, just in case they manage to free themselves before they make up." Leo hopped out of the tunnel and turned to hold the large door open for the others. Once they were all in, he closed it up and turned to survey the room.

Will was already there, hovering by the security camera feed that showed the upper floor to the engine room, and the two angry husbands trapped inside of it.

"You sure we'll be safe in here? Don't they know where the control room is?" Grover asked, nervously scratching at the stubble growing

out of his head.

Leo shrugged and made his way over to the screens. "Yeah, but if they get free I'll put the blast doors down. There's no way they can get through them, they're four inches thick. I can control the whole ship from this room, so we can honestly stay here all the way home if we need to."

From behind Will, Nico materialized out of a pool of shadows. Leo was proud to say he didn't scream. He was getting used to the guy popping up out of nowhere over the years.

"Good to see it worked," Nico commented, leaning closer so he could see the two struggling figures on the screen. "Now what?"

"Now we wait," Leo said simply, slipping down into his large, comfy commander chair. It felt good to relax.

They watched Percy and Jason wiggle and try in vain to get unstuck for a few minutes. There was one point where it looked like Percy was shouting frantically about something but there wasn't a two way sound feed so they had no idea what it was. The two stopped struggling abruptly and stood very still after Percy yelled, and they stayed that way for a good minute or so.

Then the struggling started up once more, and Percy started speaking frantically again. It was hard to tell in the dim light, but it looked like Jason responded, only much calmer than Percy.

Leo wondered what they were talking about. Whatever it was had Percy looking like he was about to strangle Jason if his hands weren't glued together behind Jason’s neck. Jason’s snarky expression gave the hint that he deserved that reaction.

"You did tell them that moving only makes it worse, right?" Will sighed, exhausted.

"Mmhmm," Leo confirmed, his lips pursed and eyebrows raised. "Don't think they got it though. Shame."

Frank stared at the screen, deep in thought. He mumbled something under his breath that Leo didn't catch.

"What?" He asked, turning in his chair so he could see him better.

"Oh, nothing, I was just- well it…kinda looks like they're dancing, doesn't it?" Frank said, letting his eyes drift down to Leo.

Leo glanced over as Percy and Jason stilled again, their bodies swaying slightly with the rocking of the ship on the agitated waters. In the dim light it sort of did look like that.

"You're right," Leo said. "They do."

Frank grunted and squinted his eyes, his head tilting to the side.

"Gonna share your thoughts with the rest of the class, Frank?" Grover asked.

"Does anyone remember that one song they danced to at their wedding?" Frank said.

"Why?" Nico asked.

"What if we played it? Familiar things trigger their memories right? We know what comes next in the album, the wedding itself. Them dancing after the ceremony shouldn't be too far ahead so I think we can probably get away with it without any long term consequences. Plus, with the way they've been acting I doubt we'll be able to make them actually look through the picture album so this has to be the next best thing. Right?"

The room was silent after Frank voiced his idea. His shoulders hunched inwards and he averted his eyes.

"Sorry," he mumbled, "It was just an idea. It’s okay if-"

"Frank, you're a genius!" Leo exclaimed. Frank’s whole countenance seemed to brighten at that.

"Really?"

"Well, yeah, but that's nothing new. Just thought you needed a reminder," Leo teased, feeling a rush of satisfaction as Frank blushed and rolled his eyes. "Now, how *did* that song go?" He mused, wracking his memory for the title.

No luck.

"Well I don't know the name of it, but I'm pretty sure the beat went something like: hm hm *hm* hmmm hmn hm hm *hmmm* ."

Nico was shaking his head before Leo had even finished humming. "No, that's definitely not it. It was more like: hm hm hm *hm hm hmmm hm* hm hmm *hmmmm.* Or something. Definitely a male that sang it though."

Leo scoffed at Nico's poor attempt at recreating the tune. "Uh, no. You're the one that's got the wrong song, buddy. The next part went like this: hmm hmm hm- hmmm hm hmmm hm hm hm *hm-hmmmn!* "

Nico curled his lip and turned towards his boyfriend. "Will, you're the expert on music, which one of us is right?"

Will nervously glanced down at Nico before saying, "I'm pretty sure you're both wrong. If I had a piano or something I could play it exactly, I just don't know the title. The tune went: *hmmmmm* hm hm *hm* hmmm hm *hm.* Hm hmm hm hm hmmm-"

Leo stood up from his chair suddenly. " *No* , you're thinking of a different dance, that one was later in the evening. The one Frank is talking about went like this: hmmm hmm hmn- Frank, back me up here will you- *hmmm* -"

Frank started humming along with him, thankfully the same tune, but it looked like Will and Nico weren't giving up either. They started trying to hum their own song over his and Frank's while Grover decided to get in on the action too, because Leo heard him start up the traditional Wagner's wedding march. It wasn't very helpful.

Leo hummed louder, and Frank followed his lead, his melody turning firm and aggressive.

He wasn’t sure how, but all of a sudden they were in an all out hum war, and Leo would be damned if he lost.

They were so concentrated on trying to drown each other out that they almost didn't notice when Hedge opened the door and paused halfway into the room.

He couldn’t afford to get distracted. He kept at it.

"Uh, I guess I'll just…come back later. I really don't want to get involved in whatever this is." Hedge said loudly enough to be heard over the drone of what sounded like a hive of bees.

The door clicked shut after he left

"Hm *hmmm* hm hmn- okay, you know what, this isn't working!" Grover shouted.

Leo only backed down when he heard Nico and Will start to go quiet.

Grover rubbed his temples, squeezing his eyes shut. "Thank you. Let's never do that again, agreed? Good. Like it or not, Leo, but Will actually does have the best chance of being right. Let him play a song. It can't hurt to try, right? If it isn't the one then we can change it."

Leo huffed and crossed his arms, but sat back down and scooted his chair over so Will could access the radio controls.

Too late did he forget the song that was last playing over the speakers

when he was alone on the ship. Will turned the radio on right as Leo tried to lunge for the volume control.

"Wait-" He wasn't fast enough.

" *-call me Mr. Boombastic, tell me fantastic. Touch me inna-"*

Leo laughed self-consciously as he finally managed to kill the sound. "Sorry, that's, uh, Festus' favorite song. He's shy about it, so maybe don't mention it." He lied.

On the screen, Percy and Jason were understandably looking around, visibly confused.

Will was very clearly fighting a smile but wisely kept quiet.

Festus, however, voiced his objection through the loudspeakers. *Thhhrrrr click click click eeeeerrreek!*

"He said thanks for not music-shamming him. Really appreciates it."

Sccreeee! Which roughly translated to *Unbelievable!*

But the others didn't need to know that.

Nico pursed his lips and smacked the volume button.

" *-smooooth, just like a silk-a. Soft and cuddly, hug me up just like a quilt-a. I'm a lyrical lover-* "

Leo pushed his hand away and clicked the sound off again. "How about we leave my robot dragon's music taste out of this and just have the sound off until we find the song?"

Nico shrugged innocently. "Works for me."

Leo eyed him up for a second before taking his hand away from the volume control. Will was already scrolling through a long list of songs, pausing every now and then to reread a title. It didn't take very long before he was nodding his head, satisfied.

"Okay, yeah, I'm pretty sure this is it." Will declared, clicking on the one he was looking at. He hit pause to turn on the sound and adjust the level to a reasonable volume more suited to a slow dance track instead of arguably one of Shaggy's best hits. "Everyone ready?" He asked once satisfied.

After they all nodded and crowded closer to the screen, Will took a steady breath and hit play.

Percy and Jason responded immediately, their bodies going rigid as they stopped yelling. In the dim light he saw them watching each other as the music flooded into the room.

At first Leo thought it wasn't going to work, but then Percy’s head slowly started to dip down until it was resting against Jason’s chest. Jason blinked sleepily and turned his head to lay his cheek on the top of Percy’s hair.

It was a good mirror of how they looked that night after the ceremony, and it lifted Leo's spirits to see them looking so relaxed and at peace in each other's presence after the days on end of animosity and tension.

"Guys, it's working," Frank whispered in a hushed voice, as if speaking too loudly would break the spell.

Leo felt Frank's hand slip into his and give a quick squeeze before sliding away, out of reach.

After it was clear Percy and Jason had fallen asleep they kept the music going on repeat, a soft lullaby in the background. Just in case.

Leo was impressed to see that they'd remained upright, like sleeping penguins, instead of toppling over into the goo. It wouldn't be very comfortable once they woke up again, but it was probably better than being half submerged in a mysteriously viscous bog.

"Alright," Leo said, leaning back in his chair, "this went even better than we thought it would. I'll even admit that Will had the right song, first try."

"Thanks, Mr. Boombastic." Will said, humor coloring his tone.

Leo flipped him off.

Chapter End Notes

A short one this update because the next is going to be the

wedding and probably kinda long and plot heavy 😶

Also, the wonderful payasi over on tumblr did an adorable fanart of Guido so please go check them out and give them some love! They've also let me use one of the Guido pictures as my new icon <3

Wedding Pt.1

Chapter Notes

> The song that Leo and the others play over the speakers is the acoustic version of Latch by Sam Smith. The boys danced to it at their wedding.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Jason's POV

After the lights went out, the ship went quiet. There were no sounds of floorboards creaking above them, just the unsteady rhythm of their breaths. Despite that, Jason had the uncomfortable prickle down his spine that meant someone was watching them. He knew there were security cameras around the ship in certain places and the small concentration of electricity up in the corner of the room told him there was one here. Leo and the rest were most likely in the control room, monitoring the feed.

"They're watching us," he muttered.

Percy rolled his eyes, waves of irritation radiating off of him. "Of course they are, why wouldn't they be?" He asked sarcastically. The small movements of his arms around Jason's neck betrayed the fact that he was trying in vain to get his hands unstuck.

"I don't know why you're doing that, it just makes this stuff harder. Didn't you hear what Leo said?"

Percy glared up at him, his green eyes flashing in what little light

managed to get down here. "Might as well try, otherwise we'll be down here forever. You got any better ideas?" As he finished talking, his jaw tensed and his whole body tried to pull away from Jason. He didn't get far, didn't get *anywhere,* to be truthful. The only thing he succeeded in was rocking them both unsteadily.

"Percy, stop, it's not going to work!" He said through gritted teeth.

Percy ignored him and gave another struggling pull to no avail.

"Will you just-"

"Will *you* shut up and help me find a way out of this?" Percy spat. His voice was angry, mostly, but Jason heard the miniscule wavering of nervousness there as well. Percy hated being held down, trapped in a place or situation he couldn't get out of- gain control of.

Jason sighed, trying to bury his frustration and not antagonize the situation further. "Just calm down, Leo said it wasn't permanent, there-"

" *Fuck* Leo!" Percy yelled, trying to pull away again.

Screw it, Jason thought, *if he isn't going to listen, then there's nothing I can do. Might as well try it his way and show him it won't work.*

" *Fine* ," he said out loud, and tried to take his hands off Percy's waist. Whatever this goo was, it had seeped through the material of Percy's shirt and stuck both his hands and it to his skin.

Percy clenched his teeth and leaned the opposite way. Jason tried to plant his feet more firmly on the ground and pushed with his legs, hoping the leverage would aid him.

For one heartstopping moment, he actually thought it might work, as the goop between them creaked alarmingly.

But that was all it did. It didn't stretch, or break at all.

Now Jason was simply irritated with the whole thing. He couldn’t even find his way out of this stupid trap that Leo had set. First the intense dream he'd woken up from, then this? What a fucking day this was shaping up to be.

He struggled harder, again using his legs to push, as that seemed to be the only thing that produced any results. Percy redoubled his efforts as well, and Jason felt Percy’s thigh muscles flex between his legs. The glue didn't even creak this time, it just hardened more.

A strange look crossed over Percy’s face and his body went rigid.

"Stop, stop, Jason, s-stop!" Percy said, his head whipping around wildly.

"Stop?" Jason asked. "You're the one that suggested this!" He tried to pull away again.

Percy’s arms tightened around his neck and his eyes were wide in alarm. "Stop, please, just- just stop!" He shouted, panic rising in his voice.

" *Why* ? You said-" Jason cut himself off as the reason for Percy's frantic attitude revealed itself. Jason held very still, extremely aware of the semi hard length growing against his thigh. The one slotted between Percy's legs. "Oh," he said quietly. The goo wasn't the only thing hardening between them it seemed.

Percy's face flushed beet red, he wouldn't meet his eyes. "Don't flatter yourself, it has nothing to do with you. It's…it's just the friction," Percy grunted.

Jason concentrated on staying still. "Right," he said, for lack of anything better to say.

In his effort to not move, he almost lost his balance and had to steady himself with his legs.

Percy shuddered with his movement. "S-stop, don't do that!" He hissed, his expression mortified beyond belief.

Jason felt him grow harder against his thigh.

He wasn't sure why he did what he did next. Maybe he was just tired of always trying to be the good guy. Maybe he wanted to be the asshole, just this once. Maybe it'd make him feel better.

"Do what? Do this?" He asked innocently as he very slowly and deliberately rubbed his thigh upwards.

He felt Percy's fingers tighten in his hair. "Y-yes, that! Don't-" he broke

off, his eyelids fluttering closed, his breath shaking in his chest, "do that," he finished.

Jason raised an eyebrow and tilted his head. "Oh, *do that?* " He shrugged as best he could. "Well, if you insist," he said amicably.

Percy’s eyes flew open, but there was really nothing he could do to prevent him from moving again.

It only took a few more seconds before Percy was fully hard against him.

"Fucking - *stop!* They're *watching* us!" Percy hissed at him.

Jason looked around at the empty room. "And? It's not like they can see your problem."

If looks could kill, Jason would be at the gates to the Underworld right now, knocking on his uncle’s door.

" *What if they hear us?!* "

Jason tsk'd, moving his leg again. A smile crept across his face. "There isn't a two way audio feed." Being this close to him, after so many days of ignoring each other felt…it felt nice. Normal. *Right.*

Well, aside from the whole antagonizing Percy for his surprise boner, it was normal.

Percy’s lip curled up. "Will you *stop it!* " He snarled. "You're being a dick!"

" *I'm* not the one with the erection," he shot back, moving his leg against him for emphasis.

It was…um… *semi* true.

He couldn’t really help his own body's reaction, but luckily it didn't look like Percy had taken notice yet.

"Wh- you're the one that *gave* it to me!"

"Oh, *really* ? Thought you said it had nothing to do with me?" He countered smugly.

Percy averted his eyes guiltily.

"That isn't- that doesn't mean- shut up!"

"That doesn't mean shut up?" Jason asked. "Okay, I'll keep talking then."

Percy looked well and truly mad by this point. He couldn’t blame him, he *was* being an ass about this.

"When we get out of this, I swear I'm going to-"

"-call me Mr. Boombastic, tell me fantastic. Touch me inna-"

Percy stopped talking and Jason stopped moving abruptly as the upbeat, sultry song blasted out of the speakers.

It cut off as fast as it came.

"What the…" Jason said, looking around for an explanation. He didn't find one.

Apparently neither did Percy. "Was that…was that *Boombastic?* " He asked incredulously.

Jason didn't answer, because just as he went to speak, the song came back on.

"-smooooth, just like a silk-a. Soft and cuddly, hug me up just like a quilt-a. I'm a lyrical lover-"

Jason looked down and met Percy's eyes in confusion.

"Don't *look* at me," Percy snapped suddenly, his eyes flicking away quickly.

Jason kept looking at him. "Why, what are you going to do if I don't?" He challenged.

Percy said nothing, but the side eye he gave said all that was needed.

Jason sighed, the urge to antagonize him deflating as rapidly as it had appeared.

“Maybe…maybe we *should* talk,” he suggested.

Percy stubbornly pressed his lips together and gave another futile tug with his arms.

He tried again. “Leo isn’t going to let us go unless we do.”

“I could sink the ship,” Percy replied bitterly. “He’d have to let us go then.”

“And risk damaging it even more than it already is?” he asked rhetorically. “No you wouldn’t.”

"At this point, maybe I would."

Jason looked down nervously, the tone in Percy’s voice telling him that the possibility wasn't as far away as he'd thought.

Once again, before he could speak, a song started filtering through the ship. This one wasn't an upbeat, lewd song like the last one.

It started out slow, with instrumental music preluding any lyrics. When Jason heard it, it triggered something in him. He knew he'd heard this song before, knew it was *important* somehow, but not why.

A quick glance down told him Percy was just as intrigued by it.

"Why does that sound familiar?" Percy asked in a hushed voice.

"I don't…know," he said, blinking slowly. His eyelids were harder to open each time he blinked.

Percy sucked in a sharp breath and his eyes tracked something moving to the left of them. Jason lazily followed his gaze, wondering when his sister had gotten there, and why she was slow dancing with a giggling Grover.

And why they were both see-through. How odd.

"I feel…sleepy," Percy mumbled. Jason felt the tense bunch of Percy's muscles relax as his arms gently rested on Jason's shoulders.

Jason hummed in agreement, forcing his eyes back open.

Somewhere deep inside him he knew what was happening, that they were getting sucked into a memory, but his body was responding sluggishly, if at all.

Percy blinked softly up at him, a slow, content smile creeping across his lips. Jason couldn't help the answering one that appeared on his

own face.

Around them, ghostly versions of their friends danced in varying degrees drunkenness. Axel had a hold of someone who looked suspiciously like Elvis, and was twirling him around behind Percy.

He startled a little when Percy turned and laid his head on his chest, not seeing him move at first. But then he hummed again, resting his chin on top of Percy's hair.

Distantly, he heard the lyrics to the song start up.

" *You…lift my heart up, when the rest of me is down…"*

The song tugged at his memory again as it continued to play.

" *You, you enchant me, even when you're not around. If…there are boundaries, I will try to knock them down…* "

Underneath the song echoing around the ship, he heard another layer to it, as if there were two sources playing the same song during different parts. Momentarily, the other one got louder, drowning out the first.

" *How…do you do it, you got me losing every breath… What…did you give me to make my heart beat out my chest?* "

"Jason?" Percy whispered, turning his face further into his chest.

"Hmm?" He asked, on the verge of succumbing fully to the memory.

Percy breathed deeply a few times, his body relaxing against Jason's even more.

"Will you dance with me?"

Jason couldn't even open his eyes anymore, his consciousness slowly drifting away from him. "Hmmmn. I thought that's wha' we're already doing." He mumbled.

"Oh," said Percy. "Oh, well, tha's good, tha's…tha's nice. Thank you."

The last thing Jason heard was a few lyrics to the song.

" *...now I got you in my space, I won't let go of you. Got you shackled in my embrace, I'm latching on to you…* "

-Flashback-Saint Dwynwen's Chapel-

Percy's POV

Axel was right. This place was really nice. The very short, animated, ginger haired man that greeted them once inside introduced himself as Martin.

"But you can call me Tiny," he said with a hearty laugh, thrusting his hand out for Percy to shake. "Any friend of Axel's is a friend of mine!"

Percy wondered if Tiny knew about the burly biker gang members that were also Axel's friends.

He took his hand and shook it, introducing himself and Jason, who Percy had to subtly elbow to get him to pay attention instead of gawking at the interior of the building. Jason immediately focused in, giving Tiny a polite smile as he too shook his hand.

"Is Tiny short for Martin?" Jason asked.

Thalia elbowed Jason, much like Percy had a few seconds ago.

Tiny's smile faltered and Percy worried they'd somehow offended him, but then the man broke out in loud chortles, snorting every now and then, wiping tears from his eyes.

Axel patted Tiny on the back, almost knocking him to the ground.

"Nah, we call him Tiny because he's five two!" Axel laughed.

Tiny finished laughing and waved them forward as he started off down a hallway.

"Never thought about it like that, truth be told. I've just always been short. Never did hit that growth spurt my mom always promised me. But that's alright, world's a lot more interesting down here anyway."

"Can't agree with you there, Tiny," Axel said. "I've been tellin' people how the weather up here is since high school. Pops used to joke I was half giant."

Tiny snorted. "Not so sure it was a joke, my friend," he said, craning his neck up to see Axel. "Anyways, we're here," he announced, pausing just long enough to throw open the set of doors they were in front of before striding into the room.

It looked like a small tailor shop, rows of suits, dresses, and other formal wear lining the walls. A small stool sat off to the corner by a floor length mirror.

Tiny picked up a fabric measuring tape and draped it over his shoulders. "So," he said, turning back to them and rubbing his hands together excitedly, "three young people show up at my door, I'm assuming two of you are planning on getting married? And since the lady looks a little *too* young I'm guessing it's these two gentlemen. Am I right?" He asked pleasantly.

After confirming his assumptions, Tiny clapped his hands together loudly. "Lovely! I *love* weddings! I wouldn't be in this business otherwise, eh?" He winked. "Now, let's get to work. Are we wearing suits, dresses, one suit and one dress? I've got it all, lads, and all can be modified in a jiffy if need be."

Percy looked over at him and nodded.

"Just regular suits will be fine," Jason told Tiny.

Tiny gestured towards the right wall. "Those over there will be about

both your sizes. Take your pick of what I've got and I'll make any necessary adjustments."

Instead of following his instructions they both kind of hovered there. Tony noticed.

"Hmmn? Something wrong?" He asked.

"Not really, I was just wondering…do we pay you now or is it-" Percy started.

Before he was done speaking, Tiny was shaking his head vigorously. "No, no, no. Not necessary, gentlemen. I told you, we're friends. What kind of monster would I be if I charged my friends?"

"What'd I tell you two?" Axel asked firmly. "I said you ain't payin' nothing. Now go find something to wear, I gotta catch Tiny up on some business matters." He shooed them off without the chance to respond.

Jason leaned over and whispered, "We'll slip some money in his pocket before we leave."

Percy gave him a conspiratorial look and nodded.

It didn't take them too long to find a couple of plain black tuxedos that were pretty much their size. Tiny ushered them to the fitting rooms and had them try the suits on so he could make any last minute adjustments.

"One at a time please, it's bad luck to see your partner in their wedding attire before the ceremony," he instructed, tugging Percy's sleeve to get him to follow him to the stool and mirror.

Jason's pleasant laugh sent a warm thrill up his spine. "Isn't that superstition only for brides who wear dresses?" Jason asked from inside his fitting cubicle, but his door stayed closed.

Tiny tutted as he fiddled with the hem of Percy's pants. "It doesn't only apply in that circumstance."

After he was done, Tiny sent him back into the fitting room and dragged Jason out to do his fitting. He didn't need any adjustments, but Percy's hem line had to be taken up a bit so it didn't bunch.

"Perfect," Tiny announced once they were dressed normally again and standing in front of him. He turned and flicked through a row of ties, muttering to himself before pulling out a blue and a green one. "Since we're going with simple, I think these will accent nicely." He informed them, adding the ties to the clothing rack where the suits hung. "I'll have these moved to the private dressing rooms attached to your ceremony room so you can dress there before we start. Just a few last minute things I need to gather before we can begin. You'll each need one witness for the signing, but other than that I think everything's good on your side."

"Oh, um, actually we have a couple of friends that will be here. Can we wait for them?" Percy asked.

"Of course! The more the merrier! Friends, family, pets, invite whoever you wish to, it's your wedding after all. I'm just here to make it happen."

Before Tiny left to go do whatever else he needed to take care of, Thalia pulled him off to the side and had a hushed conversation with him. Jason watched them warily, but Percy zoned out, letting his link to Grover open up.

Grover would know what it meant and bring the others to them.

There was a part of Percy that couldn't really believe this was going to happen, a little nagging voice in the back of his mind that told him something would go wrong and mess everything up.

That voice was infinitesimal compared to the butterflies and excitement fluttering around inside him.

Nothing ever goes right for you , it hissed at him.

Meanwhile, his stomach swooped when Jason rolled his eyes and gestured for Percy to look over at Thalia as she grinned, self-satisfied at whatever it was she had just said to Tiny.

"She's plotting something," Jason said, affection overshadowing whatever irritation he was trying to project.

Percy knew that having Thalia here probably meant the world to him.

"When isn't she?" He asked fondly.

"Hmmmn." Jason narrowed his eyes. When Tiny turned his back to talk to Axel about something, Thalia turned and rooted around in a

drawer for a moment before slipping something into the pocket of each of their suit jackets. She threw a glance over her shoulder at them, saw she was being watched, and stuck her tongue out.

"What was that?" Percy asked, referring to whatever it was she'd slipped into their pockets.

Jason shrugged. "Don't know. I suppose we'll find out soon enough."

Tiny had to step away for a bit to finish everything up, and in the down time that created they had nothing to do. So Axel gave them a tour of the chapel, much to Jason’s poorly concealed excitement.

Percy fell behind to question Thalia about earlier, but she wouldn't tell him anything, just that it was a part of the wedding outfit Tiny had forgotten. Thalia was kind enough to remind him.

Suspicions raised, Percy let the matter be for now because their friends started showing up and Thalia got distracted greeting everyone.

A presence materializing behind him made him turn, already expecting Nico to greet him with a snide remark.

Instead, Nico's normally pale face was flushed from the alcohol bottle he held in his hand. Will was next to him, looking just as flushed and giggly.

It reminded Percy of his own bottle, still tucked away in the pocket of his jeans, surprisingly light and compact. Definitely magic involved in that.

He hadn’t taken a drink since…well he actually didn't remember when. Before the biker fight, surely.

Nico handed the bottle to Will and cleared his throat, steeling himself for something. He held out his hand expectantly.

"Okay." He said simply.

Percy eyed his hand, wondering what was about to happen. When nothing did, he asked, "Okay what?"

Nico rolled his eyes. "The basket, dumbass. I lost the deal, remember?" His face scrunched up and in a poor imitation of what Percy suspected was supposed to be him said, " *When I win, you have to be the flower girl at my wedding, blah, blah, blah, I cheat at Poker, blah, blah, blah, look at me, Jason, I'm so cool!* "

Will snickered into the crook of his elbow as Nico talked. When he looked composed enough, he attempted to take a drink from his bottle.

Behind him, Percy saw Thalia zone in on what was in Will's hand, saw her look around in alarm as a few of the others held their own bottles.

He saw her turn to Jason and lean in, as if she was smelling the air around him.

Her face turned angry. Angry and sad. With no warning to her brother, Thalia latched onto his arm, pulled him away from a very

confused Leo, and shoved him through a door, following close behind. The door shut firmly.

Percy wanted to go to them, help Jason calm her down and explain some things, but something told him this was a conversation they needed to have alone.

"Well?" Nico's stubborn, insistent voice brought him back to his own conversation.

"You don't actually have to do that, Nico. I was just joking with you. It's enough that you're here," he told him, slipping around the two so he could go wait for Jason and Thalia to get done talking. Nico watched him go, actually surprised he managed to get out of that duty.

Percy couldn't hear much through the door, not that he was trying to eavesdrop, just muffled voices and the occasional drawn-out silence. Either the shouting was already over or it had never started.

The door handle clicked, and he looked up to see them walking out of the room. He expected tension and perhaps even aggression, but surprisingly they were calm. Whatever Jason had said about his alcohol consumption had obviously placated Thalia’s worries.

Thalia had her arm looped through Jason’s, walking side by side with him. They approached him when they saw him hovering nearby.

"Don't look so guilty, Jackson," Thalia said, "it's almost like you *want* me to be angry."

"Percy secretly loves it when people are angry at him. He's really a masochist at heart," Jason teased, coming over to link their hands together.

"Oh yes, the stress and worry are what I get off on. Truly, it makes me feel alive."

Thalia rolled her eyes. "Whatever, dorks. I don't kinkshame, but that doesn't mean you have to tell me about it." With that, she spared one last look at Jason then went off to find Grover.

"Everything okay?" Percy asked quietly. "Saw you guys go in there. She looked pretty upset."

Jason drew him in for a hug and Percy let it happen, relaxing as Jason wrapped his arms around his shoulders. "She was, at first," Jason mumbled after a bit.

Percy listened to the steady, strong beat of his heart for a moment, just enjoying the comforting embrace they were in.

"What'd you tell her?" He asked finally.

Jason pulled back and released him. Percy wished he hadn't.

"The truth. We talked about…" he averted eyes momentarily, as if the subject he was leading up to made him uncomfortable. "We talked about our mom. Thalia…she was around more than I was, obviously, so she remembers what it was like when our mom drank a lot. She's just worried about me is all. We had a good talk, I reassured her about some things. She took it surprisingly better than I thought, to be

honest."

"That's good," Percy said gently. Then added, "you know, we don't have to drink anymore if you don't want to. I'm fine with-"

"And *I'm* fine, Percy. Really. I promise you, I wouldn't drink if I didn't want to. If I change my mind, I'll *tell* you. Okay?"

Percy chewed his lip in contemplation. "Alright," he relented finally. "Just wanted to make sure you're okay."

"Thanks, Thalia." He said sarcastically.

Percy recoiled back dramatically. " *Excuse* me? Do not call me that, we're about to get *married* ." He paused, then added, "plus, I have way better taste in music than her."

Jason laughed incredulously, but whatever he was about to say got put on hold as Tiny came strutting down the hallway towards them, Axel, who had slipped off somewhere right before their friends showed up, was behind him.

"Um, who's the big biker guy?" Grover asked nervously.

Percy grinned at him. "Oh, that's just Axel. We met him a bit ago in the middle of a fight. Pretty cool guy."

Grover looked anything but impressed with Percy's explanation. "Why does this always happen to you?" He demanded.

Percy could do nothing but shrug helplessly.

Grover pinched the bridge of his nose and wandered off towards Leo and Frank.

Tiny, it seemed, was in a bit of a hurry. Another wedding party had shown up (this one actually scheduled) and he had to get started fitting them for their outfits. He led everyone over to a set of double doors and their friends went inside, but Tiny held him and Jason back.

"Nope, you two get to go get dressed up and ready for the ceremony," he informed them. "Attached fitting rooms are through those doors over there. Now, one more thing I forgot to mention." Tiny looked truly disappointed as he said, "unfortunately I'm in the middle of renewing my officiant's license and have to wait for the state to get back to me before I can legally finalize any weddings. So I won't be able to officiate you personally. We have an officiant on loan from another chapel until my papers are re-approved."

Tiny stopped and fidgeted on his feet before telling them the next part. "Now, he's somewhat of a… *character,* but don't worry, he takes his job very seriously."

Just then a man dressed in a white sequined jumpsuit came sauntering down the hall, pulling a comb through his thick black pompadour as he did.

Beside him, Jason tried very hard not to laugh. "What do you think, Percy? Married by Elvis, the King himself."

Percy pressed his lips together tightly to contain his laughter. "Sounds

like a good time, if you ask me." He said, after the Elvis impersonator had disappeared into the ceremony room.

Tiny looked visibly relieved and released a breath. "Lovely. Now you two go get dressed, I'll come notify you when your ceremony is starting." He gestured them towards the appropriate fitting rooms then left.

There were actually two fitting rooms attached, one for each of them. Percy's suit was in the one off to the left. He took one last look at Jason as he walked into his own room, an odd sensation coming over him at the knowledge that the next time he'd see that man would be right before they stepped up to the altar together.

Inside the private room was pretty much everything one would need right before a wedding. Percy stuck to simply getting dressed in his suit.

Before he did, his conversation with Thalia came back to him and he curiously searched through the suit jacket's pockets until his fingers encountered a soft slip of fabric bunched up in one.

Cautiously he pulled it out, unsure of what to expect.

A dark green lace garter dangled from his fingers.

He stared at the delicate fabric, face burning even though there was no one in here to see. There was *no way* he was putting that on. None.

He set it aside and started shedding his shirt and jeans. He picked up the newly hemmed pants and held them up, impressed with Tiny's

quick needlework.

As he went to pull them on, the green garter caught his eye and he paused. Thalia had put one in Jason’s pocket too, hadn't she?

What if he actually put his on, and then later found out Percy hadn't?

The mental image of a half naked Jason in blue lace invaded his mind. Well. *Well.*

Percy shoved the image aside and, face still burning, donned the garter before assembling the rest of his suit.

The last thing he needed to do was tie the tie. He stood in front of the mirror to do so, desperately calling up anything he remembered about the few times he'd actually worn one.

It took some fiddling and cussing, but eventually he was satisfied with how it lay, and tucked it under the jacket, folding his collar back down.

That was everything. There was nothing left to do, except contact Hera, but he couldn’t do that in here.

With nothing for his hands to do or keep his brain occupied, the reality of the situation began to sink in. He was really here, really going to go through with this. The thought was exciting, exhilarating even, and he stared at himself in the mirror, trying to ground his mind and not let it wander lest it found a problem to worry over.

He was so focused he almost missed the door opening behind him. Thinking it was Tiny, Percy turned with a smile on his face, only for it fall immediately as he caught sight of the stranger standing across from him.

The man was older, but not *old* , if that made sense. There was something about his face that seemed timeless, and Percy realized with a start that he was looking at a god.

Great, just what I needed.

The man wore a brightly-colored suit that gave the impression of something tropical.

Formal tropical, what a fashion statement.

The man's face was unfamiliar to him, but at the same time it felt like an old friend.

His hand subtly crept into the pocket of his jacket, feeling the familiar weight of his sword resting within.

The god watched him do so silently, tracking his movements.

Then it was like a veil parted, the Mist masking the man's face fell away.

Percy stumbled back in surprise, bumping against the counter behind him.

" *Dad?!*"

Chapter End Notes

I'll be going camping in a week so I'm not sure when I'll have the next chapter written.

Wedding Pt. 2

Chapter Notes

> Sorry for the extra long wait between chapters this time, I was participating in a fic exchange. I ended up cranking out a 30k word jercy one-shot fic called Stitch River Resort.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Flashback-Saint Dwynwen's Chapel-

Percy's POV

Poseidon stepped towards him, crossing the room in three easy steps, and then came to a stop.

Percy didn't know what to do. Should he speak first? Get a word in before the torrential downpour of disapproval came?

His dad surprised him a second time that day by calmly fixing a wrinkle in his tie knot, settling his hands lightly on top of his shoulders after.

The second he did so Percy's mind sharpened in an instant, all traces of leftover drunkenness bleeding out of him like oil off of water.

Did his dad just magic him completely sober? That was kind of rude.

"Percy," he said, not unkindly. "Look at you." His voice wavered and Percy feared it was with anger or disappointment, but then Poseidon sniffed and drew him closer, wrapping his arms around him as he did

so.

"Um, dad?" Percy mumbled, face smushed up against the bright tux. He hesitated a moment before carefully hugging the god back. "What's-what are you doing here?"

Poseidon released him, stepping back to hold him at arm's length by his shoulders again. His eyes roamed over him, an unfamiliar look on his timeless face. "I heard through the grapevine that there was quite the gossip worthy event happening tonight."

"Well-"

His dad sniffed again, turning away to pull a handkerchief out of his pocket and blow his nose. "Forgive me," he apologized once he was finished. "Allergies, you know."

That was bullshit, gods didn't get allergies and they both knew that. Percy let it slide anyways.

"Okay," Percy said, accepting his excuse. "So…who, uh, who did you hear that rumor from?" He asked nervously. "And who else heard it?"

Poseidon ignored his questions and instead crossed his arms, adopting the stern 'I'm your dad and I have something important to say, so you better listen' pose. "I just need to know *why* . Why him, Percy?" He asked.

Percy stubbornly lifted his chin. "Why does it matter?" He shot back. *Ah, here's the disapproval,* he thought.

"It matters because I asked," Poseidon told him.

"It's not really your business," he refuted.

"You are my son. *Everything* you do is my business."

Percy scoffed. "Is that what this is about? You're worried how this will make you look?"

"No, I'm not," Poseidon said calmly. "Just answer my question."

"No," he replied, standing his ground.

" *I need to know* ," Poseidon said, not backing down.

"Too bad," Percy remarked, starting to turn away from him, but his dad caught his arm and halted his movements.

"Jason Grace," Poseidon said. "Son of Jupiter. You're about to tie yourself to him for life eternal, do you understand that? A bond like the one you are pursuing does not end with your death. You will follow each other in the afterlife. If one of you gets Elysium, the other will too. If one of you chooses reincarnation, the other is reborn as well and you will spend your entire lives seeking each other out. You must know the details of this bond you've asked for."

"Seems pretty simple to me," Percy said, wrenching his arm out his

grasp.

"It *isn't,* " Poseidon emphasized. "You will share all things. Two souls, made one. That is what you are committing yourself to, Perseus. Why are you doing that with Jason Grace?"

"Why do you *care?* " Percy demanded, turning to face him again, his patience growing short.

"Tell me," his dad commanded. "Tell me that you know what you're getting yourself into!"

"I do!"

"Give me your reason!"

"It doesn’t matt-"

" *Yes it does,* " Poseidon boomed, his voice loud in the small room. "Why have you chosen-"

Percy stopped forwards, his patience all but lost at this point, and got in his dad's face. "Because, *dad* , I love him!"

The room fell silent after his declaration and Percy had the absurd comparison cross his mind to that of when Ariel from The Little Mermaid yelled *but daddy I love him!* at her father. That was ridiculous, she'd known the prince for like, two hours. Percy had known Jason for *years,* he'd saved the world with him, spent so much

time with him. He knew him. It was that simple. Percy knew Jason. Knew what made him happy, mad, sad, he knew what his favorite food was and how he only liked three ice cubes in his drinks.

He liked his laugh and the way it made him feel warm inside. The distracting way his smile pulled at his scar and gave him a roguish appearance that in no way matched his sunny personality. He liked the warmth he naturally put off.

Jason Grace was as familiar to him as breathing. Always one step beside him, never ahead, never behind.

"I love him," he said again, softer this time, more to himself than to his dad. "He makes me happy. I feel… *alive* around him." Percy looked up to meet his dad's eyes. "That's…that's why. You wanted a reason? Well, now you have one."

Poseidon nodded slowly, and then reached for him again, folding him back into an embrace.

"Good," his dad mumbled from somewhere above him. "That's all I wanted to hear. As long as you're doing this for *you* , Percy. For you and him. I don't really care what you do or who you do it with, son, I just want to know that you're happy. And if he makes you happy, then I'm all for it."

Percy swallowed around the unexpected lump forming in his throat and blinked against the sudden stinging assaulting his eyes.

This time when he hugged his dad back it was less of an awkward return and more of a genuine reciprocation of affection.

"I thought you'd be upset," Percy admitted once they separated.

His dad brushed some more wrinkles out of Percy's tie and straightened his collar. He conjured two little blue colored roses and tucked them into his lapel.

"No," he said after a moment. "I was simply worried you'd do something under the influence and regret it the next day. This *is* an eternal commitment."

Percy laughed a little and touched the flowers his dad had given him. "Is that why you sobered me up?"

Poseidon nodded. "I needed to hear you say it and *mean* it. Just…I'm just trying to look out for you, Percy. I may not be the most attentive parent out there, but I *do* care for you."

Percy turned away briefly, unsure of what to say at first. "Thanks, dad. Love you too."

Poseidon chuckled and came to stand behind him, staring at their reflections in the mirror. He laid a hand on his shoulder again. "You know," he said conversationally. "This is the first time I've ever seen one of my children all dressed up for their ceremony. It's actually the *first* ceremony I've been to, if I'm being honest. I think I'll stick around for a bit, if that's okay with you?"

Percy smiled to himself and nodded. "It would mean a lot if you did," he said to his dad's reflection.

"I wish your mother could be here, too," Poseidon sighed.

Percy's smile slipped from his face in a sudden moment of realization. "Mom's gonna kill me," he choked out, turning wide eyes to his dad.

Poseidon pursed his lips and said nothing.

"You're supposed to reassure me!"

Poseidon's eyes shifted back and forth, possibly looking for a way out of this conversation. "She'll be sad," he said eventually, "that she wasn't here. Don't worry, I'll drop by and give her some pictures, tell her and Blowfish all about it."

Percy groaned, leaning forward to brace himself against the counter. "I'm so grounded," he mumbled. Then he laughed at the hilarious notion of a grown, married man getting grounded by his mom.

"I think it'll be fine," Poseidon said gently. "She just wants what's best for you."

He let himself be comforted by those words.

"So…" Poseidon started after a moment. "Athena's girl. Annabeth, Architect of the Gods. I'm not trying to pry into your business anymore than I already have, but I can't help but notice how suddenly your partners have changed…"

Percy slowly turned around, keeping a carefully blank face. "Dad, are you slut shaming me?" He asked incredulously. He didn't really think that was the case, but the backpedaling his dad did immediately was

worth it.

"Wha- no! No, no, I'm just-"

Percy laughed, his facade breaking. Poseidon stopped trying to explain himself, realizing Percy had been messing with him. "Sorry," he said once he was done laughing. "Just wanted to see your face."

Poseidon adopted a haughty stance, embarrassed at being made fun of. " *Anyways,* " he prompted, gesturing with a hand for Percy to talk. "You and Athena's girl always seemed inseparable."

"We were," Percy started, then corrected himself. " *Are.* I think. She's still my best friend, I'd do anything for her."

"So what happened?"

"She…" Percy took a deep breath and let his eyelids close, remembering the day he'd left camp. Remembering the feeling of his heart breaking when Annabeth uttered those words. "She broke up with me," he sighed, leaning back against the wall. "Before we left to come here she pulled me aside and said we needed to talk." Percy chuckled, looking back and wondering how his past self hadn't sensed what was about to happen. "I didn't even…I didn't know she'd been planning it. She never seemed off, everything was normal, like it always was. And then the next thing I know, she's telling me she wants to break up, that there was nothing I could do to convince her otherwise because she'd thought about this for a long time and had made up her mind."

"She gave no reason?" His dad asked after the lull in conversation had stretched far enough to become deafening.

"No," Percy said. "She had plenty of those. The one she kept bringing up was about *my* happiness though. Apparently her and Piper, Aphrodite's daughter, had come to the conclusion that Jason and I weren't happy with how things were. Annabeth said they'd suspected we had feelings for each other for quite awhile. I thought maybe she was worried we'd gone behind their backs, but she told me they trusted us enough to know we'd never do that."

"And did you? Have feelings for him, that is."

"Ah," he said. "I…at the time she said all this to me I didn't think so, but…but Jason and I talked. We just sat down and talked about everything and anything. I started to realize that maybe the girls were right. I'd never thought about Jason like that before…except I *had.* For a long time. I was doing it unconsciously, in everything we did. Wherever we went, we went together. We were just…a package deal. It was always Percy and Jason, and when it was just one of us we'd always get asked where the other was. In hindsight I can definitely see how they picked up on their theory. We must've been so *obvious.* It's kind of embarrassing, now that I think about it." He laughed self-consciously, aware that he'd just info-dumped his relationship problems on an Olympian god.

Poseidon didn't laugh though. He thoughtfully stroked his beard and said, "There is nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to love. Sometimes the best things happen unexpectedly, you meet someone who makes you feel like you can do anything. Colors look brighter, the birds sing a little louder, your heart beats with the ocean's pulse, and all that person has to do is be near you." His dad had a far away look in his eyes and Percy had the distinct feeling that he was thinking of a time roughly twenty two years ago on a beach in Montauk. Of a woman with dark hair, eyes that saw the impossible, and a smile that could melt Stygian ice.

"Someone you'd break a godly oath for?" Percy asked slyly.

Poseidon focused back in and laughed this time. "Ay, someone indeed. But because of that, here you are, finding your own someone. And I wouldn't change a *thing*. "

It was then that Tiny barged in, the words on his tongue dying when he saw the additional guest.

"Hey, Tiny, this is my dad, uh, Mr. Jackson. Dad, this is Tiny. He owns the chapel." Percy introduced them and Tiny's face lit back up as he rushed over to shake Poseidon's hand.

"Oh, Mr. Jackson, it's so wonderful to have you here! Parental support is something I cherish so much. Please, if you need anything at all just let me know."

Poseidon shook the enthusiastic man's hand and nodded through his rambling. "I believe I have everything I need, but thank you. I'll go wait in the ceremony room so you two can finish up here." He excused himself shortly after, disappearing through the doors that led into the room he'd soon be getting married in.

Tiny did a quick run through of his attire, fussing with the hem again for a moment before declaring him good to go. "Perfect, *perfect!* " He exclaimed. "Everything is ready and everyone is in place. All that's left is the most important part: you two. Oh! And I almost forgot. There's two tall, scary ladies who arrived not long ago. I tried to usher them away but one said they knew you. Said they were from your religious organization, I believe, and that they were here to legalize your marriage with them. I hope it's alright that I let them in."

That takes care of having to contact Hera, Percy thought. But *two* people? He had a queasy feeling he knew who the second one was.

"Yeah," Percy assured him anyway. "Yeah, they're supposed to be here."

"Lovely," Tiny beamed. "Now let's get you out there so I can go collect Jason and then we can get this thing started!"

Tiny hurried him out of the dressing room and as they passed Jason's door it flung open.

The smell of ozone permeated the air when Jupiter himself stalked out of the room, visibly upset and fuming mad. He stopped when he saw them, his fists balling up and Percy wondered, and not for the first time this evening, if he'd have to fight a god on his wedding day.

But then Jupiter looked back towards the open door he'd just walked through and his shoulders lost their tension, his hands uncurling at his sides. He shot Percy one more murderous glare before pushing past them to follow after Poseidon.

"Uh, who was-"

"Jason's dad," Percy said, strained. "He's not my biggest fan, as you could tell. I didn't know he'd be here."

Tiny puffed out his chest, like he was ready to beef with the king of the gods himself, right here and now. "He's not gonna cause any trouble is he? I don't tolerate bigotry, and I *will not* hesitate to escort him out."

Percy put up his hands, trying to placate the angry man. "Trust me, if he was going to cause a scene it would've happened by now. It should be fine."

Tiny deflated reluctantly, but the look in his eyes said he'd be keeping a watch on Jupiter if he stuck around. Not that Percy thought he would. He was probably gone already.

"He better behave himself," Tiny grumbled under his breath.

Percy was led through a different set of doors, his view of the ceremony room obscured by a white curtain. It was there that Tiny left him to go retrieve Jason.

From behind the curtain he could hear chatter. He recognized a few of the voices, but there were a couple that definitely weren't there when he left the group.

He wondered who else had shown up unexpectedly.

"Hey," a voice said from behind him.

Percy turned as Jason pulled the door closed behind him. His eyes were a striking blue as always, and extra focused. Jupiter must have done the same thing Poseidon had and taken away the alcohol influence from him.

Tiny had gone around to the other door it seemed. They were alone.

He'd seen Jason dressed up like this before, when he'd taken him to his mom's wedding, but he still took his breath away now.

There was a distant reservation lurking behind his eyes though.

"Hey yourself," he replied, slipping his hand into Jason's when he came closer. He pulled him into a hug, trying to comfort him in any way he could. "You okay?" He whispered into his blond hair.

Jason tightened his arms around him once before releasing him. "Yeah," he said. "Just…my father paid me a visit."

"I saw," Percy said. "I take it things didn't go so well?"

Jason blew out a breath and shrugged. "About as well as it usually goes. Except with more yelling."

"Let me guess, Ole Dad didn't approve of me?"

Jason snorted. "Percy Jackson, you are at the top of his Most Hated People list and you know it. I'm half convinced you wrote your own name in the number one spot."

"What can I say? I live to displease him."

"Marrying me will definitely do that," Jason laughed.

Percy hummed but didn't say anything.

"What?" Jason asked.

Percy leaned up and pressed a kiss to his cheek. "I'm not marrying you for him. I'm marrying you because I want to be with you."

Jason turned, catching his lips in a proper kiss. "He tried to bribe me into backing out of this," Jason admitted against his lips.

"What'd he offer? A magic weapon?" Percy asked, half joking.

Jason hesitated. "No."

Percy leaned back to see him better. "What? Why did you hesitate?"

"He wasn't serious, he was just trying to trick me."

A seed of suspicion took root at Jason's avoidance.

"You're joking," Percy said. "He really offered you a place on Olympus just for dumping me?"

Jason rolled his eyes. "Like I said, he wasn't serious."

"Wow," Percy said. "I'm honestly impressed. I didn't think he hated me *that* much."

"Percy," Jason chastised. " *He was lying.* And even if he wasn't, I wouldn't want it."

"You'd turn down godhood?" Percy asked skeptically.

Jason looked away. "For that reason? Yeah, it just seems…I don't know, I'd feel like a sham. If it was an actual reward for something good I'd done? Who knows," he shrugged.

"Hmm."

"Drop it, Percy," Jason warned. "My dad's just an asshole who's trying to drive us apart. Don't let him get to you, it's what he wants."

He pursed his lips and decided to let the matter go. He was about to get married after all. This should be a time for happiness.

Percy nodded and drew one of the blue roses his dad had given him. He slid it into Jason's lapel and kissed him again. "Okay."

Jason looked down and touched the flower. "Where'd you get this?" He asked with interest.

"My dad gave them to me," he said quietly.

A small smile played around Jason's lips. "He's okay with this?"

"Yeah. I was prepared for him to be disappointed, but…he surprised me." He paused, then added, "I'm sorry. I'm not trying to, uh, brag or anything, I just-"

Jason brushed his thumb across his lips to silence him. "Hey, stop. It's okay, I know you aren't. It's not your fault my dad is an asshole. Forget about him, he doesn't matter. Let's just get married and be happy." As if on cue, the soft tinkling of a piano filtered in from the other room. Jason looked behind him. "Tiny said that's our signal to walk out."

"Well," he grinned despite the swirl of sudden nervousness that welled up. "Let's go then."

Jason cupped his face gently and kissed him, long and slow.

The piano music grew louder, sounding almost insistent. Bossy.

Percy laughed as he drew away. "As much as I'd like to stay here and keep doing that, we kind of have a previous engagement to attend. It'd be pretty bad if we didn't show up to our own wedding."

"I know," Jason said, turning to face the curtain. He tucked Percy's arm against his as they stood shoulder to shoulder. "Just a kiss for good luck."

And with that, they walked through the slit in the curtain. A short walkway cut through a few rows of chairs, leading to an altar that was crowned by an arch of blue roses.

Heads turned to look at them and Percy had to work hard to mask his

surprise at some of the guests. Apollo sat behind the large piano, playing his heart out on Wagner's traditional wedding march. His sister Artemis sat next to Thalia, sandwiched on the other side by a tiny girl who he recognized as Hestia.

Even *Dionysus* was there, dressed in a deep purple suit that looked straight out of the eighties. He caught Percy's eye and lazily raised a can of diet coke in his direction.

Far away from everyone else sat his dad in his atrocious tropical suit, a very visibly upset Jupiter right next to him. His dad had a twinkle in his eye as he beamed at him. Jupiter glared daggers and did just about everything but draw his finger across his throat threateningly. He was dressed in a black suit, like he planned on attending a funeral.

Percy smiled wide at them.

No one else seemed to take notice of the two gods in the back.

Fuck you, Zeus , he thought in his head as they strolled past. He was surprised the god didn't stick his foot out and trip him as he walked by. That must've taken an enormous amount of self-restraint.

When they reached the base of the altar they separated and walked up the steps on either side until they were standing below the arch. Hera stepped up as well, her impassive gaze flicking over them as she took her place. She held her hands up in front of her, a folded white and gold cloth resting on them.

Without a preamble, she began speaking.

"As we celebrate this bond of unity today it is important that we keep in mind that, while this is certainly an occasion of tremendous joy, the promises we witness here today are serious and more than just life-altering commitments. The bond I forge between these two will tie them together until their souls fade from existence." She showed her first real emotion of the night when her stern facade cracked, softening ever so slightly. "A partnership like this does not come along very often. It is rare to see two people who are as compatible as these two."

She breathed deeply before continuing. "And so, It is with simultaneous feelings of elation and expressions of respect that we proceed with the ceremony. Without further ado, we shall begin the exchanging of vows." Hera looked at Jason. "Jason, would you please deliver yours first."

At first he looked slightly panicked and Percy couldn’t blame him. They hadn’t really sat and wrote out any vows, but then he relaxed and spoke.

"Today I take you as my Husband. I love you now as I've always loved you, even if I didn't know it yet. And I always will love you, until the end of time," he declared, voice strong and clear.

Hera looked at Percy. "And now Percy, would you deliver your vows?"

Percy felt a gentle warmth flow through him and he realized this must be part of Hera's magic. He opened his mouth and let his heart speak the words his brain didn't know. "Today I take you as my Husband. I love you now as I've always loved you, even if I didn't know it yet. And I always will love you, until the end of time."

Hera nodded, pleased with their vows. "Jason, Percy, please join hands," she instructed.

They did, holding on gently. Jason gave him a soft smile and Percy's heart did a little flip.

"Jason, do you take Percy as your cherished Husband, in front of these witnesses, and promise to stay by his side through sickness and health, battle and peace, joy and sorrow, so long as you both shall exist?" She asked.

Jason swallowed hard. "I do," he whispered.

Percy couldn't look away, his eyes were locked on to Jason's.

"Percy, do you take Jason as your cherished Husband, in front of these witnesses, and promise to stay by his side through sickness and health, battle and peace, joy and sorrow, so long as you both shall exist?"

"I do," he promised.

She shifted the fabric over to one hand and unfolded it with the other. Their rings lay inside. "By exchanging these rings, you solidify an everlasting commitment to one another. The rings serve as a welcome and constant reminder of the bond you've formed with your partner. Just as these circles never end, so too shall your bond." She delicately picked up the ring closest to Jason. "Please, repeat after me: I, Jason Alexander Grace, give you, Perseus Jackson, this ring that I have forged with my soul as a symbol of my infinite love. Just as the circle of the ring completes itself, so you complete me."

Jason held his chin high as he repeated her words. She held out the ring that had absorbed his blood and he took it carefully, sliding it on to Percy's left ring finger. The metal was already warm, and if he

concentrated hard enough he thought he could feel a sort of… *energy* coming from it.

Then it was his turn. "Percy, please repeat after me: I, Perseus Jackson, give you, Jason Alexander Grace, this ring that I have forged with my soul as a symbol of my infinite love. Just as the circle of the ring completes itself, so you complete me."

He repeated the words and accepted the ring she gave him. His hand didn't shake as he slipped it onto Jason’s finger. As it settled into place his ring warmed significantly and pulsed once.

Hera cleared her throat and looked up over the watching guests. "Jason and Percy, by the power I wield, I am pleased to pronounce you Husband and Husband, sealed together today in law, love, and soul. May your partnership be one filled with happiness and balance. You may now kiss your groom."

And then it was done. They were married.

As they kissed, Percy lost himself in the tide of emotions that were rolling through him. He let his mind wander and focused on nothing but the feel of the man he loved.

A sharp wolf whistle cut through the silence and they broke apart sheepishly, a wide grin fixed to his face, turning to see the crowd.

They'd barely parted before Thalia ambushed them, nearly tackling both off the altar. Her small arms were like vices around them as she cried into their shirts. Percy didn't think he’d ever seen Thalia cry before.

They hugged her back and Jason whispered, "Love you too, sis," into her spiky hair.

Before he knew it another pair of arms were wrapping around them. Big, strong, leather clad arms that actually lifted all three of them off the ground.

Axel sat them back down and led a still crying Thalia down the other stairs to make room for the other well wishers.

Apollo shoved his way to the front and gave them hearty pats on the back, promising to immortalize this moment in a custom made song. Percy politely told him it wasn't necessary, but he was already humming something under his breath as he walked away.

He didn't catch most of it, but what he did hear wasn't very encouraging.

" *Hmmm, hm, hmmhmm, and that's why he married his cousin!* "

He cringed internally but was distracted by Aphrodite in a huge southern style dress. She gave them each a gentle kiss on the forehead, which made his ring pulse again.

Behind her, way in the back, his dad nodded proudly at him and winked before Jupiter grasped the sleeve of his brother's jacket and towed him out the doors.

Once the crowd had all taken their turns congratulating them Hera beckoned them over to the corner where a small table sat. Faux Elvis was right next to her, shuffling some papers around.

"I just need your signature on a few lines before I leave," she told them, all business-like.

"Uh huh," Elvis said. "Imma need those Johnny Hancock's as well, little dudes." He laid the papers down and gave them a pen, pointing to where they needed to fill out some information and sign.

"And that's it?" Jason asked him. "We just sign this and it's official?"

"Uh yup. That's all. Give it a sign and you're good to go." Elvis laughed and added, "so long as you're not first cousins or a closer relation, that is."

He said it as a joke, obviously, and Percy was quick to join in the laughter as he shared a look with Jason. "Ha ha, nope. Definitely not," he said. "No shared DNA here."

Behind Elvis, Hera rolled her eyes and impatiently looked at her blank form.

Percy hurried things along with Elvis' form, which he then folded up and handed to Tiny, who promised to file it with the court records office as soon as possible.

Hera's form required more than just witnesses, though.

"I need a family member's signature from each of you," she reminded them.

Jason’s was easy, he just waved Thalia over and she was more than happy to sign. He also managed to convince a very wasted Leo to sign the witness line.

Percy asked Axel to sign as a witness and the guy just about fainted in happiness. His family signature was a little more complicated, though. Well, at least he thought it would be, but Frank, who had accompanied Leo over to the table, offered to sign it.

Hera eyed Frank critically. "Are you of relation to Percy?" She asked him.

Frank tried to focus on Hera's face, but it was obvious he was seeing more than one of her. "I'm technically a Neptune Legacy, so I think so?"

"Will that really work?" Percy asked.

Hera thought about it for a minute before handing Frank the pen. "Sign it and we'll see."

"What happens if it doesn't?" Leo asked nervously.

Hera shrugged. "The paper explodes."

Frank stared at the paper like it might grow a mouth and bite him.

"Hurry up," Hera said. "I have more interesting places to be."

Frank blinked once again and went for it, the pen scrawling out his wobbly signature quickly.

He finished and backed up a step.

Hera scooped up the paper after it was clear it wasn't going to explode on them.

"Lovely," she commented. The paper disappeared into thin air and she dusted her hands off briskly. "Everything is done. I'll file the paperwork in my system and you'll get a copy once the marriage is finalized."

"Finalized?" Jason asked. "Isn't that what we just did?"

"Oh, no," she said cryptically. "You are technically married, but it isn't permanent until the union is consummated. At that point it is finalized."

Jason's face reddened slightly and he laughed awkwardly. "Ah, okay. Got it."

"Know that after consummation, there will be absolutely no way to break this bond," she told them.

"So once we have sex we're stuck with eachother forever," Percy summed up. Jason elbowed him, but Hera simply nodded.

"Correct. Now I'll be taking my leave. Enjoy the rest of your night, gentlemen. And congratulations."

With that, she turned and walked out.

Before he knew it, Jason was pulling him onto the dance floor as Tiny announced it was time for their first dance as a married couple.

"Dance with me?" Jason asked, spinning him around until he was tucked up against him, hands on his waist.

The music started up slow and instrumental. Leo and Grover were behind the music controls, grinning to themselves.

"I don't know, Jason. I'm a married man now. My husband might get jealous if he sees me with you," he teased.

"I'm sure he'll survive," Jason laughed, leading their slow swaying movements.

For a couple of minutes it was just them, dancing to the song their friends had picked. Eventually, though, Axel twirled by them, a bewildered looking Elvis locked in his clutches. Thalia and Grover clumsily trotted along behind them, followed by Leo and Frank, who were giggling like crazy as Leo led them in a salsa dance that in no way matched the tempo.

Even reserved Nico was letting himself enjoy the moment. Will had him pulled close in a corner, his head resting on Will's chest with his

eyes closed. They weren't moving much, just swaying slightly, but Will's skin gave off a very faint glow and there was a genuine smile on Nico's relaxed face.

"I'm glad we did this," Jason whispered above him. "I don't know what it would've been like if our girlfriends didn't dump us and push us together, but I really don't want to find out."

Percy hummed. "Me too," he said.

He heard Jason's heart rate pick up so he lifted his head off his chest and looked at him. "You okay?"

Jason laughed, his eyes shiny. "More than. I was just thinking…I've never felt like this with anyone but you. Even when Piper and I-well of course I loved her, but it never felt…it was more of a platonic love. I just wish I'd realized it sooner, so that the girls didn't have to go through that period of worry and suspicion. That they didn't have to tell us our own feelings. It wasn't really fair to them."

"You're right," Percy agreed. "But it's done now, and I think we're all happier for it. I know I am."

Jason hugged him close, their dance halting on the edge of the dance floor. The song had long since ended and a new one had begun, so no one was really looking at them.

That is, until an excited little Thalia pushed her way through the crowd towards them.

"There you two are! Come on, Tiny says it's time for cake."

"Cake?" Jason asked, confused.

"Duh," she said, herding them over to the other side of the room. "Can't have a wedding without a wedding cake."

And what a wedding cake it was too. Three tiered, white and blue icing decorations accented in green. At the top two small groom figures embraced each other.

"Don't be too impressed," Tiny said, appearing out of nowhere. "I always have 'em on hand. They're blank in cold storage and I just decorate them before the ceremony. Your friends told me to use those colors by the way. I think it came out good."

"It's nice," Percy told him. "Really, I didn't even expect one."

Tiny grinned and pulled an enormous chef's knife from the little case he was carrying. "I'm glad you like it," he said as he handed him the knife. "Now get up there and cut that thing so we can get some pictures."

Axel, he saw, took a lot of pictures.

Jason stood behind Percy, one arm reaching around his side so they could both hold the knife. When the first cut through the cake was made, cheers rose up from the onlookers.

Percy knew from his mom's wedding what came next. They cut two small pieces and Percy handed Jason one. They made like they were

going to feed the other a bite but in the end they both wound up with frosting smeared across their faces.

Jason laughed loudly, gathering him up in his arms and dipping him backwards. When he kissed him Percy tasted frosting, but he didn't care. He was too busy trying to get his smile to go away long enough to properly kiss his husband.

"Oh man!" Grover slurred, stumbling his way over to them once they'd righted themselves and were wiping the cake off their faces. Grover slung an arm around his shoulders and patted his chest. "Man, I-I love you man. You're my best friend, and I-" Grover hiccuped mid sentence. "I can't believe I just saw you get *married.* I've known you since you were just a kid! Just a little sassy brat who thought he could take on the world." Grover sniffed, rubbing at his eyes with the back of his hand.

Percy chuckled and extracted himself from Grover's clingy arms. "You're extremely drunk, Grover. But I appreciate the sentiment."

"And Jason!" Grover continued, wobbling over to him. "Jason, you-" He hiccuped again. "I didn't know about you at first. You seemed like a real stuck up dick, you know?"

Jason looked down at him in surprise. "Um, no, I don't actually."

Percy tried to step in, but Grover brushed him off.

"Oh. Well you did. But now I like you! Have for a while, actually, but that's beside the point. I used to *hate* you," Grover continued.

"That's…news to me," Jason said faintly.

"Mmhm. I thought you were gonna steal my best friend from me. You were always hangin around him, laughing and doing shit that made *him* laugh, and-" Grover broke off to laugh, doubling over to try and catch his breath. "But now I know it's because you liked him in a *different* way! Oh, imagine my relief!"

Leo noticed their conversation and hurried over, trying to lead Grover away. "C'mon, buddy, let's get you some water," Leo said.

"Leo! My pal, my buddy, you know what I'm talking about right?"

"Uh, nope," Leo said quickly, tugging on his arm.

Grover blinked and tried to focus his sight. "Oh, well just a few days ago you told me-"

Leo laughed loudly to cover up Grover's slurred words. "You're a little confused, man. I'll get you some water." Leo looked back as he dragged Grover away. "You two should go wash that frosting off before it stains your face."

"Jealous best friends," Jason said lightly. "They make you feel loved."

Percy snorted and took Jason's hand. "We *should* wash this off. Leo's right, it will stain."

He pulled Jason along, out into the corridor in search of the

bathrooms. They didn't take long to find, just around the corner. Inside, Percy hopped up onto the counter and let Jason take a wet paper towel and wipe away the remaining frosting. He returned the favor, with Jason saddled in between his spread thighs.

"There, all clean," he declared, tossing the paper towel into the garbage can. "What?" He asked when he noticed Jason simply looking at him silently.

"Seriously, what?" Percy laughed after he still hadn't answered him.

A slow smile curled Jason’s lips before he leaned forward and kissed him passionately. Surprised by the sudden display of affection, but in no way upset about it, Percy kissed back, letting his arms wind around Jason’s shoulders.

"Sorry," Jason mumbled against his lips, "I just got distracted."

"I'm certainly not complaining," Percy remarked, lifting his legs and crossing them behind Jason’s back, pulling him closer. He left a trail of kisses up the side of his neck, then back down.

Jason inhaled shakily. "We shouldn't start this here, Percy," he warned, weaving his fingers into his hair, holding his head closer to his neck. "Someone could walk in any time and see us."

"So?" Percy said, kissing his way across Jason’s jawline. "I don't care."

"We really shouldn't scar our friends anymore than we already have tonight," Jason commented, turning his head to catch Percy’s lips.

"Mmmmmn. It's their fault if they walk in."

Jason snickered into his shoulder. "This is a *public restroom* ," he reminded him. One of Jason's hands wandered up to play with the first button on Percy's shirt.

"Boo hoo," Percy said impassively as he squeezed Jason's ass through his pants.

Jason jumped a bit and laughed. "You drive a hard bargain, Husband. How could I say no to that?"

"Well-"

Percy was cut off by a strange sound. It was muffled, coming through the wall behind them. They shared a look and went quiet to listen.

It happened again.

"Is that…someone crying?" Percy asked, hushed.

"I think so," Jason said. "It's coming from the women's room."

Percy let his legs fall open and Jason stepped back, helping him off the counter.

"Should we…should make sure they're okay?"

Jason nodded and they left the bathroom, hesitating for just a moment before cracking the door to the other bathroom.

"Are you alright in there?" Jason called.

The crying stopped briefly before erupting again as the person continued sobbing.

"Let's go in," Percy whispered. "We need to make sure they aren't hurt."

Jason hesitated again before ultimately deciding that the importance of aiding whoever was in distress outweighed the social pariah of entering the opposite gender's bathroom.

They opened the door all the way and walked in.

There were two women there, one sitting on the counter much like Percy had been, except she was wearing a light blue wedding dress and was crying huge, heaving sobs. Tear tracks ran down her perfectly made up face and Percy had to be slightly impressed at whatever makeup she was wearing because it was still impeccably applied.

The other girl, wearing a green dress, was trying to shush her, giving her hair loving pets, dabbing at her tears with a paper towel.

"Oh, Ames, it's alright, it's okay, no, no, please don't cry, love. He

doesn't need to be here, okay? I love you, Amelia, and that's all that matters. Oh, honey please-"

The girl on the counter, Amelia, flung her arms around the taller girl, pulling her closer, and buried her face into the ringlets that cascaded down her shoulders.

The taller woman spied them in the mirror and her eyes narrowed into slits. "Get out of here," she growled. "Does this look like something you can help with?"

Chapter End Notes

> Also one of my other jercy fics 3 AM Aquarium Jailbreak just recently reached 1k kudos 🥺 thank you guys for all your support

Wedding Pt.3

Chapter Notes

> Little bit of a long wait time for this one sorry guys. I ended up getting sick 🤢 . Not Covid but it takes me a bit to get over illnesses.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Flashback-Saint Dwynwen's Chapel-

Jason’s POV

It didn't, not really. Two women crying in their wedding dresses wasn't something Jason had a whole lot of experience with, truth be told.

"I don't know," Percy said before Jason could drag him out of the bathroom. "Depending on what's wrong we might be able to. You need someone beat up? We could do that," he offered. "If he left you at the altar then he probably deserves it."

The angry woman opened her mouth to speak but was cut off by the other woman's wet laughter. She unburied her face and wiped at her tears with the back of her hand.

"I appreciate the offer, but I don't think my dad deserves to be jumped by two strangers."

"Your dad?" Jason asked.

The angry woman turned to glare at them. "Yeah, her dad. A man didn't leave her at the altar. Not everyone marries the opposite sex, you know. Gay people exist, asshole."

And suddenly Jason saw the whole picture, and mentally kicked himself for jumping to conclusions.

"I'm sorry," he said. "We didn't mean to assume anyth-"

"Obviously you did," the taller woman interrupted.

"You're right," Percy said amicably, "we *did* assume. But we were wrong, and we should've asked first. We're sorry."

"Thanks. Now leave," she said gruffly, turning back to her fiance.

"Okay, you got it," Jason said, slipping his hand into Percy's, preparing to leave.

"No, wait," the crying girl sniffed. "Thank you for trying to help. Seriously."

"Yeah, it's no prob-"

She cut Percy off and kept talking. "My dad's really…old fashioned. He wasn't very happy when I told him I was getting married to Lila, but he…he told me if I at least wore a dress to my wedding then he'd come and be here for me. I didn't *want* to wear a dress, neither of us did, but I just…I wanted my dad here so badly." Her chin wobbled as

a few more tears escaped her eyes. "But he just texted me and said he had important business to attend to and wasn't going to make it. What's more important than his daughter's wedding!" She yelled.

Jason felt a pang of sorrow for this woman. Hell, even *his* dad showed up to his wedding and he hadn't even wanted him to.

"And now," she continued, "here we are, stuck in these *stupid, ugly* dresses that we're going to have to get married in, and *I hate it!* I'm so fucking *mad!* " She burst into angry tears again and accepted the hug her fiance offered her.

"See?" The taller woman said to them. "Not much you can do."

"Well…" Jason said. "We *do* know the owner of this place. If you really wanted, I'm sure he wouldn't mind helping you change outfits before you got married."

"No. We already asked, he doesn't have anything in our size," Amelia sobbed as the other woman stroked her back.

"I mean…" Percy trailed off and shared a look with him. Jason returned it and eyed the suits they were wearing. He nodded. Percy turned back to the women. "We look about the same size…if you wanted, I mean if you didn't mind, you could wear these…"

The taller woman gave them a confused look while Amelia once again unburied her face.

"B-But don't you need them? Aren't you getting married too?" Amelia asked, a small sliver of hope hiding in her voice.

Jason shrugged carelessly. "No, we don't need them anymore. Our ceremony just ended, actually."

"Our?" the taller woman repeated.

"Hey," Percy laughed, "gay people exist, you know." He brought Jason's hand up and pressed his lips to his wedding band.

Amelia sniffled and turned her eyes on Lila. The two seemed to have a silent conversation, one of those moments that could only happen between two people who knew each other so completely.

Eventually, Lila turned back to them. "What are you guys going to wear then?" She finally asked.

Jason grinned, already picturing the looks they were going to get. "I figured it'd be an even trade," he replied.

Ten minutes later he and Percy stepped out of the women's restroom, wedding dresses donned. Amelia and Lila were right behind them, their spirits seemingly lifted.

Tiny, who apparently had impeccable timing, rushed around the corner of the hallway as the bathroom door clicked shut. He skidded to a halt, took a look at the dresses, took a look at the suits, noticed who was wearing what, and just smiled. "There you girls are! I was getting worried for a moment there. Your ceremony is all ready, it just needs the brides." he said gently.

Amelia smiled and nodded. "Thanks again guys, I really don't know how to repay you for this."

Percy waved her off. "No repayment needed. Trust us."

The girls started to follow Tiny, but halfway down the hallway Lila slowed to a stop. Amelia looked up at her, but Lila had turned to face them. "Would you like to come to our wedding?" She asked hesitantly. "We'd love to have you there. It won't be too crowded, it's just my mom, my grandparents, and Ames' brother."

"Sure," Jason said. "We'd be glad to. Right, Percy?"

Percy nodded enthusiastically before tugging him down the hallway to follow them.

The girls' ceremony was small and quiet, over very quickly, but no less special for it. Their family members had accepted him and Percy almost immediately, with no questions asked. Amelia's brother had clasped them both on the shoulder and thanked them heartily.

Afterwards, the party migrated to a different room and somehow merged with their own wedding party. It was around then that Jason and Percy started drinking again, so things got a little hazy.

He wasn't sure how long the festivities continued for, and he was honestly too caught up in the raucous activities to really care. He remembered at one point he and Percy ended up on Axel’s shoulders, a shirtless Apollo snapping pictures like crazy with an impressive looking camera.

He wasn't quite sure who, but *someone* at some point convinced him and Percy to do a garter removal and…well they were just drunk enough to agree.

At least, that's what Jason thought happened. By the time he found himself shoulders deep in Percy's skirts there wasn't a whole lot else going through his head, and after he had the silk garter held between his teeth, well…it's sufficient to say he'd long since ceased to care. And when it was Percy beneath *his* skirts, pressing soft little kisses up the length of his leg…yeah there wasn't much going on upstairs.

Amelia and Lila had to take off soon after that, their family wanting to treat them to a fancy dinner in celebration, so they said their goodbyes and gave a round of hugs.

It was only after they were gone that they realized they had no way to contact them in future. Oh well. Some meetings were fleeting. At least that's what Apollo told them before promptly serenading them with his truly awful song. Jason tuned out about halfway through. When it was blissfully over and he refocused, Apollo was holding a set of bagpipes. Thank the gods Jason had stopped listening when he did. Percy looked scarred.

"Don't worry, I'll burn it on a CD for you!" The god threatened happily before dipping out a door, never to be seen again that night.

As the party wound down and the celestial visitors started to depart, Axel rounded him and Percy up and declared that he was taking them out for celebratory drinks at his favorite bar.

They'd almost gotten out the door before Coach Hedge spotted them. He scurried over, demanding to know where they were headed. After Axel told him what the plan was, Hedge wasn't too keen on letting them go.

It took a bit of convincing, but in the end the satyr agreed to it, but only if he was there to watch over them. Axel agreed happily and gave him very detailed instructions to a bar simply named Rodrigo's Bar. Hedge promised to meet them there in about ten minutes.

The Coach also made them swear about five different times to "go *straight* there, you hear me? *No* detours!" before finally letting them leave. He didn't seem very impressed when Percy informed him that it was quite impossible for them to go *straight* anywhere, on account of the very *not-straight* nature of their relationship.

Jason dragged him away before he annoyed Hedge further.

Despite Percy's hilarious comeback to Hedge's instructions, they had honestly planned to go directly to the bar. No, really, that *was* the plan, but…well sometimes things happened. They managed to get all the way to where Axel's bike was parked before things went sideways.

Things, in this instance, being Axel's rival biker gang, the Acolytes.

Being jumped by five different guys is no big deal for him and Percy. Normally, that is. Being hindered by wedding dresses and high heels? That's another story.

Surprisingly, they managed to handle the situation pretty well, and before long the guys were scurrying back down the alley they'd appeared from. The fight wasn't over though.

A strange scraping sound reverberating off the brick walls around them made them turn.

"Uh, oh," Percy muttered. "That's not good."

"Percy, is that-"

"My immortal pain in the ass? Yeah."

Jason watched the Minotaur paw at the ground with one of his massive hooves again.

Chapter End Notes

Also...I got married back in June (Yay for gay marriage in Pride Month!)... I was hesitant to say anything becasue I did just get out of a very long relationship with my ex boyfriend back in January and its kinda soon after that, but, hey, when you know, you know. My wife is someone I was friends with before my last relationship ended. I wont go into a whole lot of details bc lmao you all arent here for my relationship drama you're here for these silly boys' relationship drama, but yeah...I'm happy now and I just wanted to share that with you guys.

Wedding Pt. 4

Chapter Notes

> Ayyyeee some of you may recognize one of the characters mentioned in this chapter from my other fic Stitch River Resort. While Axel (aka Reggie) and his mentioned wife, Marie, do cameo in that other fic, their actual home is in this one. I just love them so much I borrowed them for the other one too lmao. And now you know Axel's real name pfft.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Flashback-Streets Of Vegas-

Jason's POV

"I thought you said he wouldn't find you," he reminded him.

Percy hesitated before answering. "He probably wouldn't have, if all those gods hadn't shown up at the wedding. I think he followed us from there."

"Huh?" Axel grunted loudly next to them. "Who're you, Ugly!?" He pointed threateningly down the alley at the Minotaur.

"Axel, don't. You don't want to mess with this guy," Jason warned. Axel ignored him and straddled his bike's seat. Jason let his eyes unfocus, seeing the large, human-esque gang member that the Mist was disguising the Minotaur as. It was wearing a leather Acolytes vest. Not good.

"Motherfuckers don't know when to quit!" Axel growled, kicking his bike to life. "You know this guy, Percy? He's eyeing you up like

crazy."

Perhaps Percy really wasn't worried about the situation they were in, or maybe he was just drunk enough to be so reckless, because he took a drink of his alcohol, adjusted his dress' bodice, and said, "Yeah, that asshole killed my mom once."

"Percy!" Jason protested.

"Holy shit!" Axel exclaimed. "Is she alright?!"

"Well she got better, but still," Percy said. "Not cool."

"Not cool," Axel agreed.

Down the alley, the Mist wrapped monster mounted a ghostly bike, his true form underneath shifting down as he prepared to charge. "Uh oh," Jason muttered. "Percy, we gotta-ugh." A wave of delayed intoxication washed over him and suddenly everything seemed a lot more funny. He giggled. "He's trying to joust with you, Axel," Jason observed.

Axel squinted at the creature and revved his bike. "Don't you two worry, I ain't lived this long by losing." He kicked the kickstand up and shifted his weight, getting his balance right.

If Jason were sober, he wouldn't let a mortal fight a mythical beast. If Jason were thinking straight, he'd stop his friend from operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. As it was, he was neither of those things right then.

“Wait!” Percy yelled. At least one of them was being reasonable. “You’ll need this!” he continued, uncapping Riptide. It sprung to full length, casting a faint glow down the alley. So much for reasonable.

Axel, totally unfazed, reached for the hilt, only for his hand to pass through it completely. He blinked.

“Oh, I forgot that happens, hang on let me just-” Percy looked around, searching for something.

“Here,” Jason said, untying one of the many ribbons hanging off his dress. “Use this.”

Percy took it gratefully and used it to lash his sword to Axel’s handlebars, its pointed tip glinting dangerously in the stray lights. “That’ll do it!” he stepped back, satisfied.

Jason absently took another drink and nodded, impressed.

Down the alley, the Minotaur started its charge, its massive hooves thundering down on the cement.

“Yah!” Axel whooped, gunning the throttle on his bike. His back wheel spun in place for a second, sending smoke and the scent of burning rubber into the air, then he was off. Percy spun away quickly, startled at the sudden change.

Jason caught him before he fell and together they watched with drunken delight as the other two barreled towards each other at high

speeds.

It was over rather quickly, surprisingly. Maybe they got really lucky, and Percy's sword hit just right, or maybe one of the various gods had taken pity on them, but the instant the Celestial Bronze touched the beast, he exploded in a shower of golden dust. Axel drove down to the end of the alley before returning to them.

"Did you guys see that?!" he asked, breathing heavily.

"You did it!" Percy laughed, taking his sword back and pocketing it. Axel watched it shrink and disappear before shaking his head and picking his beer up off the curb where he'd left it.

He took a long drink before responding. "I don't know what just happened, but I think we should celebrate." Axel fished around in his pockets, withdrawing his cellphone. He waved them over and opened his camera app. They posed for a couple of pictures, hands giving the rock-on sign, tongue stuck out through their teeth. Jason was pretty sure one of them ended up as his new lock screen saver.

"Who's that?" Percy asked curiously, pointing to the picture of a middle-aged woman in a wheelchair that served as Axel's home screen picture. The woman was smiling slyly at the camera, her purple sundress ruffled by some invisible breeze. Her brunette hair, streaked through with silver, cascaded over her shoulders.

"Ahhh," Axel sighed happily. "That there's my life partner, Marie. Been married forty years next June," he declared proudly. "I'd do anything for her." He reached down and patted a clamp-like device attached to the frame of his motorcycle. "Gonna take her on a cross country road trip for our anniversary. She can't ride on the seat like us, it's not safe for her, but I've got a sidecar that she rides in just fine. It's her favorite thing," he explained gently, a fond, faraway look in

his eyes.

This man, Jason decided, was full of surprises. A huge, tattooed biker gang leader that befriended people in the middle of gang wars, attended spur-of-the-moment weddings, just wanted his estranged daughter to love him, and doted on his beautiful wife like she consecrated the very air around her. A man of mystery indeed.

Axel's phone timed out, the screen going black. He sniffed and smiled. "Sorry 'bout that, didn't mean to get all sappy on ya. I just get a little carried away talkin' about my best friend to people," he laughed. "Anyways," he continued, lifting his phone slightly to indicate the picture again, "this'll be you two forty years from now, I can tell. Just love and be loved, that's it, that's the big secret, boys. Do that, and you'll be happy till the day you die."

"That's some pretty good life advice," Percy said gently, glancing at Jason out of the corner of his eye. He took his hand and squeezed it once. "We'll keep that in mind."

Axel nodded and went to put his phone away. "Now, let's hit that bar up and-"

"Actually," Percy interjected. "Before we do that…do you mind if we borrow your phone for a minute? There's…some people we should talk to." Jason shot him a curious glance as Axel handed over his phone. "Thanks, we won't be long."

"Take all the time you need, little dudes. Bar ain't going nowhere."

Percy smiled gratefully and turned to Jason. One look and he knew who Percy intended to call.

“Right now?” he asked hesitantly.

“Yeah, I think it’s time,” he said, dialing up the familiar number. It rang four times before she picked up, and Percy hit the speakerphone button.

“Hello?” Annabeth’s groggy, confused voice asked. *“Who is this?”*

“Hey, Annabeth, it’s me,” Percy said, nervousness dancing around the edge of his tone. “Jason’s here too.”

There was a long stretch of silence before she said anything.

“Percy?” her voice was alarmingly more awake than it was before. *“What are- why- are you okay?”*

“Yeah, we’re fine,” he assured her. “Sorry for calling you on the emergency cell, but I didn’t have any coins on me for an IM.”

Something in his voice must have clued her in, because her tone went from worried to annoyed. *“Are you drunk?!”* she demanded.

Jason couldn’t help it. He snickered. “No, he’s Percy. And I’m Jason.”

He could practically hear her gritting her teeth as Percy erupted in laughter. They were still laughing when the sound of a door slamming shut came through the phone, followed by footsteps, then a door

opening.

“Annabeth, we’re not home,” Percy helpfully reminded her.

“Shut up, Percy.”

There was a distant scream and then-

“You shut up too, Drew. Piper! Piper, come on *, wake up.”*

They heard Piper mumble something, but Annabeth must have put her hand over the microphone because they couldn’t hear much except muffled chatter. Eventually another door slammed shut and then there was a static feedback.

“What the hell are you two thinking?” she hissed, the sound clear once more. *“Where the fuck are you, and why are you drunk? Where are the others? Put Nico on, now.”*

“The-They’re what?!” Piper yelled.

“Nico’s not here right now, leave a message and we’ll make sure he gets it,” Jason joked, unable to shake the light humor that seemed to float around inside him, making him giddy.

It must’ve been infectious, because Percy snorted with him, but he gave them an actual answer. “We’re hanging out with our new friend, I’m not really sure where the others are. We left them back at the church.”

“Church?” Piper asked. *“What church? What’s going on? I thought you guys were in Vegas."*

“That’s a lot of questions, Piper. Pretty bold of you, since you never answered any of mine,” Jason said nonchalantly.

On the other end of the line Piper sputtered, offended. *“Jason, this is* not *the time-”*

“You’re right, it’s not,” Jason agreed. “I’m sorry, I’m just feeling a little bold right now,” he laughed.

“Mhhmn,” Percy hummed. “We’re celebrating. That’s why we called you. We wanted to tell you the good news!”

There was another pregnant pause from the girls before Annabeth cautiously asked, *“Celebrating what?”*

“Marriage, duh,” Jason said. “Why else would *we* be at a church?” Jason rolled his eyes at Percy, as if to say, *can you believe she asked that?*

“You…you said you were with a new friend. Is…is that who got married?” Piper hedged.

“Nope,” Percy sang gleefully. “Wrong answer, try again.”

“Percy-”

“Annabeth,” Percy said.

Annabeth heaved an enormous sigh. *“Piper-”* she started to say.

“Jason!” said Jason, just wanting to be included.

Percy found it hilarious, and laughed so hard he nearly gave himself the hiccups.

“Percy, I swear on the Styx, if you don’t tell me what’s going on right now, I’m going to call your mom.” Annabeth threatened.

Percy’s chuckles slowly died off and he wiped a tear from his face. “Fine, fine. It’s us.”

“What do you mean ‘it’s us’?” Piper asked.

“We got married,” Jason clarified proudly. “How’s that for never being able to decide on anything?” he asked Piper smugly.

“Excuse me?!” the girls shrieked as one.

“Please tell me you’re joking, and this is just a drunk prank call,” Annabeth pleaded.

“Nope. I wouldn’t joke about something like this,” Percy said. “Anyways, why do you sound so surprised? You’re the ones who were all *‘you two are so blind, how can you not see your own feelings blah blah blah’* ” Percy whined in a poor imitation of Annabeth’s voice. “Well, we see it now, so congratulations, you were right, like always.”

If Jason wasn’t mistaken, it sounded like the girls were close to hyperventilating.

“P-Percy, we meant you should talk to each other and start from there, n-not-”

“Not do something insane like this!” Piper finished.

Jason clicked his tongue. “We *did* talk. How do you think we got here?”

“Please just- just- where is Coach Hedge?”

Percy’s face lit up. “Oh yeah! Jason, we’ve got to go meet Hedge at the bar! Damn, he’s probably already there, we gotta go Annabeth, Piper. Thanks for the chat!”

“No, Percy wait, I-”

“Sorry, but we really do have to go,” Jason said.

Annabeth made one last effort to keep them on the line. *“Jason, if you hang up I’m calling your sister!”*

Jason just laughed. Not only had Thalia mentioned she'd left her cell at the Hunter base camp, but she'd been at the wedding itself. Still, it'd probably be best to spare her the earful Annabeth would no doubt give her if she got ahold of her.

"Good luck," he wished her before Percy hung up.

Axel's phone immediately started to ring again, but Percy temporarily blocked Annabeth's cell number on it.

"You guys ready to head out?" Axel called over, seeing them hang up. He leaned down and snubbed out his cigarette on the side of his boot and tucked the butt away in one of his many jackets.

"Yeah," Percy said, handing him his phone back. "Although…" he trailed off and plucked at some lace on his wedding dress. "I think I want to head back to Tiny's and get back in our normal clothes before we head to the bar."

Axel shrugged. "Aight, it's up to you. Just know Tiny doesn't take clothing back, so those dresses are yours. He'll probably give you a couple dress bags to carry 'em in though."

"That's fine," Jason said. "But we should walk. I don't think it's really safe to be driving as drunk as we are."

"Drunk?" Axel asked, taking another drink of his beer, "who's drunk around here?" But he ended up just laughing and parking his bike again after shooting a text off to one of his members to come and pick it up.

"Let's go, boys. Back to the Chapel, then straight on to Rodrigo's!"

Chapter End Notes

Ayyyeee some of you may recognize one of the characters mentioned in this chapter from my other fic Stitch River Resort. While Axel (aka Reggie) and his mentioned wife, Marie, do cameo in that other fic, their actual home is in this one. I just love them so much I borrowed them for the other one too lmao. And now you know Axel’s real name pfft.

Awakening

Chapter Notes

very short chapter today unfortunately. lots of busy stuff going on at the end of the year lmao. Holidays, wife's birthday, my birthday, another fic exchange, ect. Anyways, I hope everyone had fun, safe holidays if you celebrate them!

ALSO, FANART OF THIS FIC IS LINKED IN THE NOTES AT THE END OF THIS CHAPTER

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Percy's POV

Echoes of his and Jason's laughter bounced around in his head as he slowly came to. He heard Jason’s breathing pattern change.

They were still stuck together, front to front, globs of the mysterious goop cocooning them.

Jason’s heart rate started to accelerate rapidly under Percy’s head, deep in his chest. He felt his own drumming powerfully through his veins.

He swallowed down the rising tide of panic and lifted his head.

"They know," Jason whispered. "And before we left, th-"

" *Leo!"* Percy shouted into the empty air around them, studiously shoving all thoughts of anything from his brain. "Leo, let me *out* of this!"

Jason just stood there, staring off at nothing in particular, mumbling to himself.

Percy tugged at the hardened goop, his carefully suppressed panic clawing back up his throat. "Leo, I swear to the gods, if you don't-"

The intercom clicked on and Leo cautiously said, " *The glue…dissolves in water* ."

Fucking finally, he thought, the animalistic urge to flee triggering his fight or flight response. The boat rocked on the water once.

The intercom clicked back on immediately. " *Percy, do* not *flood my sh-* "

Percy flooded the ship.

Well, kind of. Technically he only flooded the unused hallway and part of the upper floor of the engine room.

In his defense, he *un*flooded the ship as quickly as he'd flooded it. He *could* have left the water, just to be an asshole, but taking it with him meant he could let it carry him up and out of the ship without him even having to touch the floor.

He hoped Kelsie would be in her lake, but hoping hadn't really gotten him much lately, or *ever* if he was being truthful, and now was no different. Instead, Percy let himself sink to the bottom, allowing the little fishes to swarm around him as he attempted to remember how to breathe normally.

The comforting weight of water all around him helped to ground his frayed nerves.

Now it was him and his thoughts, and he had a *lot* to think about.

So many questions had just been answered for him. That flashback…

Where should he even start? There was an immense amount of information that had just been dumped on him. His dad, Thalia, Zeus, his and Jason's vows and the heavy realization of what *exactly* they meant, and of course that conversation with Annabeth and Piper.

Annabeth… That strange conversation he partially remembered from his cabin finally made sense now. She'd broken up with him. Annabeth had ended things between them because she thought he had feelings for Jason, and from what he understood, Piper had done the same.

He dwelled on that knowledge for a moment, waiting for the crushing abomination of grief to overwhelm him.

It never came.

Years of being with Annabeth, of loving her, over in a second.

And he only felt a buoyant sense of relief. No, he hadn't cheated on her, he hadn't betrayed anyone.

What he'd been beating himself up for over the last few days never even happened, everything he and Jason had done, every kiss, every touch, smile, and laugh they'd shared had been free of taboo.

In fact, their girlfriends - *ex* girlfriends, he corrected himself - were encouraging them to do all those things. Well, maybe in a more thought out, timely paced way, but in the end…they'd done nothing wrong.

With all that knowledge under his belt, he was left with one last question: *why* did he and Jason do the things they did?

No, that wasn't right. He *knew* why. He'd *felt* why.

Up on that altar, the goddess of marriage looming over him, compelling him to say what was in his heart, the words spilling from his lips like they'd been poised to jump all this time and had just then been given the okay to do so. Not to mention what Percy had told his dad, the raw truth of his words choking him up as he'd spoken them.

"Because, dad, *I love him!"*

And how could he try to deny that to anybody, *to himself,* now?

No, the question of *why* was blindingly clear to him now. The *real*

question was, what was he going to do about it?

Chapter End Notes

Fanart Links for this fic

Percy and Jason in their wedding dresses, drawn by brigwife on tumblr!

Some fucking cute ass art of Guido done by Payasi on tumblr!

a godsawful doodle of Axel done by me, who is in no way an artist and should really just stick to writing lmao

Adorable art of the bathroom scene in which everyone gets turned into animals, drawn by maesae on tumblr!

Another adorable doodle of the animal gang by maesae

Fanart of a different fic of mine
This isn't from this fic, it's from one of my other jercy ones, but it's so incredible that I have to link it as well, also drawn by maesae on tumblr!

Engines Are Go

Chapter Notes

Ffffffngkfjdjsbsb two chapters in one month??? Who am I ???

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Leo's POV

That could have gone worse.

It could've gone *better,* don't get him wrong, but it was two hours since they'd woken up and everyone still had all their fingers and toes, so… Leo counts this as a success.

"Honestly, this was a success!" He informed the others, voicing his thoughts.

Nico shot a glare at him from the other side of the captain's room, where they were all still hiding out, even though Percy was still (presumably) in the lake below them and Jason was pacing around the left side corridors like a zombie.

"Success?" Grover repeated, chewing on his thumbnail as he tracked the outside cameras, waiting for a sign of Percy's return. "I hope so."

"Well," Will said, looking up from the braid he was weaving into Nico's hair, "they did just have an existential load of information about themselves dumped on them without warning. Coming to terms with all that might take a bit. Could be too early to call it a win, but it *is* a

step in the right direction. We can be thankful for that at least."

Nico frowned up at his boyfriend. "A baby step."

Frank shifted his weight onto the other foot and hummed thoughtfully. "Baby steps are still steps," he said brightly. Frank seemed to be in a slightly better mood since the time bombs in the engine room had diffused.

"Yeah, but the faster they make up the quicker we can get home and everyone can stop moping around," Nico grumbled.

Will planted a kiss on top of his head and tied off the end of his braid. "These things take time, love. How long did it take *you* to come to terms with your sexuality?"

Nico blushed and leaned into Will's side. "Whatever," he said, but his voice was softer, less irritated now.

"On a different note," Leo said into the silence. "I have bad news, and I have good news. What do you want to know first?"

"Good news," Frank said immediately.

Leo tried to frown at him, but ended up smiling instead. "Not you, Frank. You already know both answers."

Frank grinned and shrugged.

Grover tore his eyes off the cameras for a second and said, "Good news."

"I fixed the engine. Well, at least I fixed it enough to be able to fly home once we have enough oil," he declared.

"And the bad news?" Nico asked.

"I fixed the engine, so we can fly home now. Sorry, guys. I tried to make it stretch as long as possible, but I just couldn't help myself," he said in a slightly more defeated tone.

Frank laid an enormous hand on his shoulder. "It's alright, Leo. Festus means a lot to you, no one blames you for wanting him better."

"It's not a big deal," Will said. "Just keep the hatch closed and I doubt they'll figure it out. I don't think they'll be wandering into that room any time soon anyways."

"Mmmn, I don't know," Grover hedged. "We said it before, this is a ship and Percy knows ships like the back of his hand. Sooner or later he'll figure it out. But," he added quickly, seeing Leo's face drop again, "with the big reveal out of the way, it's likely we won't have to stall much longer."

"Yeah," Leo muttered, brain already speeding through multiple scenarios at once.

Later that night, after Percy had snuck back on deck and slithered

away into his room, Leo and the others left the sanctity of the captain's room and went their separate ways. Jason had long since disappeared into his own room.

Frank followed Leo down to the scene of the crime and helped him clear up any mess Percy’s flood hadn't taken with it. Thankfully the hatch door was water sealed.

Leo opened it up and checked on the engine anyway, just in case. The once enormous, intricate behemoth of a machine was now reduced to maybe half its size. The scent of oil and grease that normally hung about the room was doubled, adding in to the slightly grungy, haphazardly organized chaotic state it was in.

But it worked, and that was all that mattered. Leo could rebuild the entire thing once he was back at Camp and had ample resources to work with, so he wasn't too worried about it at the moment. Whatever Frank hadn't managed to bend back into shape was strapped down in the far corner next to five large gears of varying sizes all missing a few teeth propped up against the wall, awaiting the forges.

Before heaving himself up out of the port hole he checked the engine oil.

Then checked it again.

And again.

Leo tilted his head and flicked the gauge. The little black needle jumped once, before laying flat at zero again.

"What the…" he tapped at the glass, but the needle stayed still.

"What's up?" Frank asked, noticing he didn't follow him up.

"I think one of my gauges is broken," he called.

Frank's head popped back into the hole. "Which one?"

"The oil. Hang on, I gotta check it manually."

He went around to the other side and lifted the long dipstick out of the funnel and wiped it off on his jeans before putting it back in and pulling it out again.

He blinked, dumbfounded. How could that have slipped past him?

"Uh oh," Frank said, dropping back down next to him. "I don't like that look. Do we have less than we thought?"

"No," Leo muttered. "We have *more* than we thought. The gauge must've been failing for a while. It's definitely not full, but we don't need seventeen gallons of oil to top off anymore. Maybe about seven will do the trick."

They were quiet for a minute, staring at the golden oil dripping off the dipstick.

"That little gas station down the road might have that, right? Isn't that

what the security guard said?" Frank asked.

"Most likely," Leo admitted. "Why do things keep going *right* for us," he huffed, annoyed.

Frank hid a snicker behind his hand. "The one time we need things to go bad, everything ends up going right. What does that say about our luck?"

Frank's words drew a laugh from him, and soon they were leaning against each other, trying to stay upright as they laughed at the irony of their situation.

"Oh, man," Leo breathed, wiping a tear from his eye. "I needed that."

Frank flashed his teeth at him in a genuine smile before bashfully looking away and clearing his throat. "So we keep this to ourselves, right?"

"Yeah," Leo sighed, picking the dipstick up off the floor and putting it back in its place. "Hey," he asked after a beat of silence, "Frank, what…when should we stop meddling in their stuff?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I just…I've been thinking about today a lot. Specifically how freaked out Percy and Jason looked after they woke up."

"And?" Frank prompted.

"We know how they feel about each other. We saw them that night being the happiest they've ever been together, and we keep trying to force them back into those people from that night, but… Frank, they're *real people,* with real feelings. I'm starting to worry that, even once they get their memories back, they'll resent each other, or even *us,* because we keep trying to get them back together. You know? I don't know, maybe…maybe I'm overthinking this. Am I? I tend to do that sometimes. Sorry, I know I'm rambling…"

Frank rubbed a thumb across his dragon tattoo and hummed. "No, I think you have a good point. But I also think there's no way Jason and Percy could ever hate each other. We *should* probably back off for now, though, give them a break and just let them figure themselves out. There's only so much we can do before it starts to become ridiculous."

Leo nodded slowly, taking in Frank's advice. He took a deep breath and voiced what he'd been thinking. "I want to lift off tomorrow and start heading towards home. For real this time."

"Okay." Frank said easily.

"What?"

"I said okay."

"You're not gonna…try to talk me out of it?"

Frank shrugged. "Do you want me to?"

"...no," Leo answered quietly. "I just expected it I guess."

"I mean, we *did* just get done saying we were going to step back a bit. And to be honest, stalling is probably giving them an excuse to avoid everything. They don't want to see Piper and Annabeth because then they'll be faced with reality, instead of whatever vague misconceptions they've made up in their heads. Once we start actually heading home it'll put pressure on them and they'll *have* to make those choices they've been avoiding. So it's a good idea. We're not technically meddling that way, we're just…doing what they asked."

"Get out of my head, man," Leo joked, feeling like he'd just heard an echo of his thoughts. "So it's settled? I mean, we should talk to the rest too, but I'm sure they'll be okay with it."

"Are we telling Percy and Jason too?"

Leo hesitated. "I don't think we should. I'll just announce lift off right before I turn on the engines. We have to stop at the gas station before climbing up to altitude, but I doubt they'll make a run for it."

"Sounds good to me," Frank huffed as he pulled him up through the hatch door. "C'mon," he continued, reaching a hand down to pull Leo up, even though he was perfectly capable of climbing out himself. "Let's go grab something to eat and sit out on the deck. It's nice this afternoon."

Leo, still slightly off kilter from being picked up and sat back down like he weighed nothing, simply nodded and followed Frank up the stairs.

Storm Before The Storm

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Jason’s POV

Nico was still in his pajamas rubbing sleep out of his eyes while waiting for the bathroom when he found him.

Jason hadn't slept. There wasn't any time to, with everything his brain was dealing with.

"Nico, do you remember the other day when you told me I could talk to you if I needed to?"

Nico startled a little, blinking blearily up at Jason from under his loose hair. "Yeah?"

"Well I need to. Talk, that is."

"Okay," Nico mumbled, trying to keep his eyes open.

Jason bit his lip and looked around the hallway, hearing the shower shut off in the bathroom.

"Not here," he said, tugging on Nico's sleeve so he would follow him around the corner to a random room that had no real use Jason could identify other than being a place where secret conversations could be had without the danger of prying ears. "Okay, so I've been-"

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Percy's POV

It was hot today, the morning sun already heating the air to uncomfortable temperatures. He was considering another day spent on the lake bottom with the happy little fishes that lived there. At least it was cool down there. And quiet.

Unfortunately that plan had screeched to a halt when he nearly had a heart attack as the engine thundered to life below him. He'd almost dropped the empty plate he was carrying to the still broken sink.

"What's happening?" Percy asked Frank, who was finishing his bowl of cereal in the dining room.

Frank, who hadn't so much as looked up when the engines turned on, simply shrugged and took another bite of his breakfast.

The loudspeaker clicked to life and Percy paused to listen.

" *Attention passengers, we will be lifting off in ten minutes, so make sure you're on board if you don't want to be left behind. This is a PSA to inform you that I've fixed the engines enough to safely operate the in-air functionality. We can only go half speed, but we should be home in a few days. We will be stopping at a nearby gas station to get oil and then the*

next time we touch down will be in Camp. If you have any questions, please hesitate to ask me. Thank you. "

"Sounds like we're going home," Frank commented in-between sips of milk. "You'll get to see Annabeth soon, Percy."

"Awesome," he choked out, heart stuck in his throat.

Leo, unsurprisingly, stayed locked away in the control room during lift off and for the short duration of the flight to the gas station. Frank had also disappeared as soon as he finished his breakfast and Percy had a suspicion that he went to hide with Leo.

Nico, on the other hand, was lounging about seemingly everywhere Percy tried to go. His smug face unsettled him enough to drive him away from his normal hiding places.

Eventually, he went back to his room to change, his regular cotton t-shirt and jeans making him just this side of too warm. Maybe the air conditioning had broken when the engines had. Maybe Leo was just being a dick and left it off. Both seemed plausible.

The *Argo II* was descending over the small gas station by the time Percy made his way up on deck wearing his shorts and orange Camp tank top. Unfortunately the only one he could find had the sides cut extremely low. He could've sworn he packed a different one, but it was nowhere to be found. The low cut sides made the heat bearable, but it also exposed most of his new tattoo. Little tendrils of self-consciousness swirled around inside him and he crossed his arms over his chest, trying to fight them off silently.

Thankfully the others appeared to be going easy on him since yesterday, and no one even spared him a glance.

It looked like the whole group was taking the chance to set foot on solid ground before the journey home, because when Leo extended the platform that would lower them to the ground they all crowded onto it.

Even Jason was there, tucked behind Nico and Will. The heat had gotten to him as well, judging by the khaki shorts and-

What the fuck?

Percy squinted against the sunlight and, sure enough, that was Percy's Camp tank top he was wearing. How the hell had he gotten it?! And why was he *wearing* it?

Percy knew it was his because it had the small, faded blue flower Hazel had doodled on the back of it with a sharpie last summer. Not to mention the way it pulled just a bit too tightly across Jason's broader chest.

That and the fact that Jason cut the sides out of all his tank tops, just like the one Percy-

He looked down at the shirt he was wearing in disbelief. Yep, this was Jason's alright. The small blue line just above the hem, made when Percy had stolen Hazel's sharpie and swiped at Jason with it as he walked by, confirmed it.

Can't do anything about it now, he thought, turning away to sulk in peace.

The platform lift settled onto the ground and Leo announced, "Alright, we've got about twenty minutes on-ground. Everyone needs to be back on the ship after that, got it?"

The gas station itself wasn't much to look at. It didn't even have a sign proclaiming its name, it just looked like any old generic building. The kind of building that, if you were pressed to think up an image of a middle-of-nowhere gas station, you'd most likely conjure this one in your head.

Inside wasn't any more flashier, just a few rows of snacks, and a wall of cooler doors with a brown, sticky looking puddle of goo settled into the cracked concrete in front of them. It was covered by a wet floor sign, as if that took care of the problem. Behind the counter a tired looking employee was flipping through the pages of a novel.

He looked up as their group filed in through the doorway. "Anything I can help you with?" He asked in a bored monotone when Leo approached the counter.

Leo explained what he needed to the cashier as the rest of the group dispersed throughout the store, probably stocking up on snacks for the trip home.

The air conditioning wasn't on in the store either, but at least it was a little bit cooler than outside.

He wandered aimlessly through the aisles, not searching for anything in particular, but it gave him something to do while the cashier rang up all the oil he had in stock for Leo.

As the cashier, Jack, his name tag read, showed Leo to where the oil was still boxed up in the back, a group of women came giggling in

through the door.

Percy didn't pay them much mind, his attention being stolen by Will, who was telling Nico and Grover something about a guy wearing a cowboy hat in the bathroom.

They were at the register waiting for the cashier to get back so he couldn't hear the whole conversation, but when Jack settled back down behind the counter he said something that made the three laugh.

Percy looked around for Leo, worried for a second before he saw him through a window. Jack must've let him use the utility door to take all the oil out.

He should probably help. There was bound to be quite a-

That thought dissipated when Nico, Will, and Grover finished paying for their stuff and rushed outside to take a few boxes from Frank and Leo, lifting their burden.

Percy shrugged and continued browsing, randomly picking up a few items that caught his eye as he wound his way back to the register. One of the women who had come in earlier got there before him and was in the process of checking out, so he queued up behind her and waited.

"I like your tattoos," the woman said, hooking one finger under the cut fabric on his side. She gave it a small tug, exposing more of his drunken matching tattoo. "Can I see the rest of this one?"

Percy mumbled something he hoped was along the lines of *no,* and crossed his arms.

"Come on," she teased, drawing her words out. "You're not shy are you? We don't have to do it here, we could get a hotel room and maybe spend some time getting to know each other. You could show me other things too," she said, her voice edging into suggestive territory.

Just leave already, he mentally begged. This was annoying enough, but the poor cashier looked like he was seeing something he shouldn't and pretending really hard he wasn't, which only made it worse.

He looked around for some excuse and happened to see her friends watching them through the window. "Your friends are waiting for you." He said, hoping she'd get the hint that he wasn't interested in whatever she was offering.

The girl brushed his comment away and grinned. "That doesn't sound like a 'no' to me. They can go without me, I'm not worried about it."

Screaming *I don't want to have sex with you, lady!* in the middle of this convenience store didn't seem like the proper thing to do.

"It's a no," Percy confirmed instead. "You seem… *nice* , and all, but I'm- I have a gi-" he almost said *I have a girlfriend* , but that wasn't right, was it?. "um, I'm in a relationship." That was… *technically* correct.

"You *are* shy, aren't you? That's okay, we can take it sl-"

Before he knew it, Jason was right next to him, an angry red flush

creeping up his neck. Jason set the water bottle he was holding down on the counter a little too forceful to be casual. Percy nearly jumped out of his skin. Jason was *very* close to him, half of his chest pressing into Percy's side.

"He's married," Jason bit out through his clenched teeth. His wedding ring clinked on the countertop as it all but smacked down on it.

The girl tsk'd, irritated, and picked up her bag. She gave Percy a long, slow look up and down, finishing with a narrow eyed glare at Jason, before exiting the store hastily.

-Present Time-Middle Of Nowhere Gas Station-

Jason's POV

It was warm today. That was okay though, Jason enjoyed warmer weather. It gave him an excuse to change into his shorts and tank top. Not that cold weather would really stop him from wearing them, but he did get less *are you insane?* looks from the others when he wore them in weather appropriate settings.

The downside was, he couldn’t find his good tank top. The only one in his room was Percy’s, but he swore he packed his favorite side cut.

Jason debated on a regular t-shirt before ultimately deciding to just wear the ill gotten tank top. Percy probably wouldn't even notice.

What a surprise it was when Percy showed up on deck wearing *his* tank top. Jason didn't miss the double take Percy gave him. Nor did he miss the barely concealed smirk on Nico's face.

Of course it was Nico. Why *wouldn't* it have been Nico's meddling? Especially after what they talked about that morning.

"Alright, we've got about twenty minutes on-ground. Everyone needs to be back on the ship after that, got it?" Leo announced as they headed towards the store.

Inside, Jason took to wandering around, enjoying the feeling of being off the ship for the first time in days. There wasn't much here he could buy that couldn't be summoned with the Camp Half-Blood plates Leo had stocked in the *Argo II* so he didn't even pretend to browse, like Percy so obviously was.

Jason snuck a look over as Percy was blindly staring at a display of cell phone chargers. He doubted he even registered what was in front of him.

His view was blocked when Leo and the cashier crossed in front of him and by the time they passed, Percy had meandered further away.

A group of girls entered the store shortly after. Most of them found a few bags of chips, paid for them and then left, but one of the women lingered a bit longer.

She typed away on her phone, giggling at whatever was on the screen. Finally she grabbed a candy bar and started to make her way to the register as the cashier came hobbling back in through the utility door. He hadn’t noticed his prosthetic leg until then, and Jason reached out to catch the door, holding it open for him.

Nico and the others paid for their goods and rushed outside to help

Leo and Frank, and then it was just Percy, the woman, and the cashier in the store besides him.

The cashier started scanning her items, adding in a pack of cigarettes at her request.

Jason had seen her give Percy an interested glance when she'd walked in. That was fine. People look at people all the time. There wasn't a law against it.

But now, as she pretended to notice him for the first time, exaggerating a surprised double take, trying to get Percy’s attention, it grated on his nerves.

Percy's clear disinterest didn't seem to bother her.

"I like your tattoos," she commented, brushing her fingers against the edge of the cut part of his shirt. "Can I see the rest of this one?"

"Ah, uh, no. Sorry," Percy said uncomfortably, crossing his arms over his chest protectively.

The woman pouted playfully. "Come on, you're not shy are you? We don't have to do it here, we could get a hotel room and maybe spend some time getting to know each other. You could show me other things too," she said, lowering her eyelashes suggestively.

Percy shuffled awkwardly and glanced out the window of the store. "Your friends are waiting for you," he pointed out.

"That doesn't sound like a 'no' to me. They can leave without me, I'm not worried about it."

"It's a no," Percy said. "You seem… *nice* , and all, but I'm- I have a gi-...I'm in a relationship."

She laughed and twirled a piece of hair around her finger. "You *are* shy, aren't you? That's okay, we can take it sl-"

Jason stepped in, unable to stand by any longer. He inserted himself between them, settling his water bottle down on the counter a little too hard. He didn't mean to. It was just hard to control basic motor functions when his hands were shaking so badly. He placed his hand palm-down on the counter to hide it, but that just made his wedding ring clink loudly.

"He's married," he tried to say coolly, but it came out more like a hiss or a growl. Again, not what he meant. He didn't realize how upset she'd made him.

He was so mad he barely registered her leaving.

The cashier eyed them curiously.

Jason tried to relax.

Percy turned and Jason thought he was about to thank him, but " *I don't need you to speak for me.* " came out of his mouth instead.

Chapter End Notes

Ffffffff don't mind me sprinkling in some cameos

Storm

Chapter Notes

Wink wonk have some soft bois

-Present Time-Middle Of Nowhere Gas Station-

Leo’s POV

Getting the oil onto the platform took less time than Leo had anticipated. Just two trips and everything was ready to go.

Leo dusted off his hands and thanked his friends for helping, noting the glaring absence of their two resident amnesiacs. That was either very good, or *very* bad, but since nothing had blown up yet he was going to put his money on *hopefully neutral.*

"Alright, let's go round up the others and get going." he said, leading the way back into the store through the utility room, closing the door behind them as he went. The bell to the front door dinged as Leo opened the utility room's inside entrance.

He hoped to see Percy and Jason right away, perhaps at the cashier counter, but there was no one in there. Not even the cashier.

Oh, wait, there he was. Jack, the cashier, was standing by the wall, looking outside the window with curiosity.

Leo and the others walked across the store to join him, wondering what the fuss was about.

And just as quickly, Leo wished he hadn't.

Percy and Jason were outside, and while they couldn't hear what they were saying from in here, it was clear they were arguing.

Leo felt exhausted. This wasn't even his relationship, and yet it seemed to drain him emotionally.

The group was quiet for a bit, just rubbernecking at the two outside.

Finally, Nico spoke. "What happened?"

The cashier shrugged and said, "Jealous husband got into it with some girl who was flirting with the brunette."

"What are they arguing about?" Frank asked.

Again, the cashier shrugged. "From what I could tell? Absolutely nothing. I think they're just arguing to argue."

Leo groaned and rubbed at his eyes, fighting an oncoming headache.

The cashier glanced at him. "You know them?"

"Yeah."

"Are they always like this?"

Leo watched Percy mock something that Jason said, then watched Jason throw his hands up in frustration because of it. "You don't know the half of it."

"Mmmn."

He let himself spectate a bit longer before deciding to leave. The pounding in his head was getting worse and the quicker he could do something about it, the better.

Without a word, Leo walked through the door, hearing the others close behind.

When they got close enough to the arguing couple the yelling slowly died down. Leo didn't stop, he just pushed his way between them and kept heading for the platform. Thankfully by the time he hit the button everyone had the good sense to be on it.

He could hear Percy and Jason whispering angrily at each other on the other end of the platform.

"Hey, you okay?" Frank asked him quietly as they rose up.

"Just a headache," he said, trying for a smile. Frank frowned, but nodded and stayed silent.

When the platform came to a stop, everyone helped move the boxes of oil onto the deck. They could stay there for a bit longer, Leo decided. For now, he just wanted some peace and quiet. And maybe some aspirin. Or ambrosia. Anything to get rid of this headache.

Leo hit a few buttons on his remote and Festus responded instantly, folding up the platform and stowing it away as the whole ship started climbing back up to altitude.

His gaze lingered on the distant storm clouds, judging their severity, before leading the group back inside.

Percy and Jason were still bickering. It wasn't helping Leo's quickly forming migraine.

By the time everyone had filed inside, Festus had started cruising speed again. The engines were fixed enough to go full speed, but Leo might have lied just a *little* when Jason had asked him earlier on in the day how the repairs were going. Whatever. He didn't need to know Leo was still slowing the trip home a bit, trying to give them enough time to figure things out. To get their memories back before seeing Annabeth and Piper again.

If only those two knew how much he and everyone else had done for them this trip.

If only-

"No, *you* said that!" Percy's indignant shout pierced through Leo's thoughts like nails down a chalkboard. He winced.

If only they'd *shut up*.

"No, I didn't!" Jason countered. "You *know* that! You're just being an asshole because it's your default setting whenever things don't go your way!"

"Oh, *I'm* the asshole?" Percy laughed " *You're* the one that likes to run away from your problems and pretend they don't exist!"

Leo didn't know what they were arguing about, and he honestly didn't care. He just wanted them to *be quiet* .

"Run?" Jason asked sardonically. "You should know something about th-"

"Get out."

The silence that filled the room after Leo's command was deafening. Everyone looked at him.

"Leo-" Jason started.

"Did you hear me? I said 'get out'." He said again, a little more confidently.

"I'm s-" Percy tried to speak.

Leo didn't give him the chance.

" *Get out of my ship right now!* " He yelled, finally losing his temper, pointing at the exit they were all still standing next to. He could feel that they were already moving through the sky, Festus having finally reached the correct altitude.

Too bad for them.

"Leo, you can't be serious," Jason said with a nervous laugh.

Just then, a loud crack of thunder echoed around them and the sky opened up, pouring down rain.

He narrowed his eyes and crossed his arms. " *Out.* "

Percy shuffled on his feet but made no move to leave. Did they think he was joking?

"You can't make us wait up on deck the whole way home…" Percy stated. "That's…dangerous."

"There's a guard rail. You'll be fine."

"But it's raining." Percy tried again, sending a nervous look at the nearest window.

"Boo hoo, you're waterproof, it's not gonna kill you."

Percy hadn't mentioned the rain for his own benefit, Leo knew that. He was worried about Jason. So why didn't he just *say* that?

"Leo, please don't throw us out." Jason finally resorted to pleading.

"I won't," Leo admitted. "Frank?"

To be truthful, he had no idea if Frank was even okay with the idea of tossing these two out into the elements, let alone if he'd be willing to forcibly kick them out the door.

But judging by the giant octopus that suddenly filled the room, Frank had no qualms with it.

Percy and Jason were definitely stronger in a fight, there was no doubt about that, but in that instance they'd been caught completely off guard.

After all, no one expects to get grabbed by a tentacle twenty five thousand feet in the air.

There were two indignant yelps, the sound of a door slamming shut, and then Frank was back to being Frank the human.

No Percy or Jason in sight.

Leo rushed to the front door and tore open the panel right next to it, quickly clipping one of the wires underneath. The blast shield slammed down seconds before the door knob rattled.

He opened the window just a smidge. Two pairs of irritated eyes peered back at him.

"You can come back in when you both stop being so fucking childish!" He yelled. "Maybe take this time to figure your shit out!"

Then he slammed the window shut again and turned around.

" *What?* " He demanded of the rest of the group.

No one, not even Coach Hedge, who'd wandered in on the scenario halfway through, said anything.

Nico and Will slipped out of the room, quickly followed by Hedge and Grover.

Leo slumped back against the wall, his headache nearly unbearable.

"Come on," Frank said gently, tugging on Leo's hand. "You should eat something."

-Present Time-Deck Of The *Argo II* -

Percy’s POV

Today officially sucked.

Not only did he get hit on by a random stranger, but now he was exiled from the warm interior of the ship. Stuck who knows how many thousands of feet in the air on the freezing, unprotected deck of a massive ship.

Fuck.

The rain came in what seemed like a constant waterfall, and nothing Percy did helped to slow it down.

It didn't bother him much, truth be told, but Jason looked like a drenched dog, his normally gravity defying hair plastered to his forehead and face, shoulders hunched.

Even though Percy wasn't getting wet, it didn't mean he wasn't *cold*. The winds cut through his thin clothing and seemed to go right to his very bones.

But Leo wasn't letting them back inside. Leo had eighty-sixed them and everyone else had just stood there and let it happen. Frank had *helped* it happen.

No amount of banging on the door and yelling seemed to change their minds either.

The only thing to do was try and find a relatively protected spot on deck and wait out the storm.

Except, the deck had no cover. There was nothing above him but

thick, heavy storm clouds. He missed the heat that had been prevalent on the ground.

This *sucked* .

They ended up sitting on the deck itself, close to one of the guard rails, a good ten feet apart, arms crossed stubbornly.

Well, partially out of stubbornness and partially to try and keep himself from shivering too badly. This muscle cut shirt was *not* fit for stormy weather.

He wasn't sure how long they sat there in silence while the *Argo II* peacefully glided through the raging storm, but eventually he gave in to the urge to sneak a look at Jason.

He was sitting with his knees up, forehead resting on them with his arms wrapped around his head, trying to keep the rain somewhat at bay.

His heart jolted painfully, heralded by a small lump forming in his throat.

Percy swallowed and looked away, but kept finding his eyes wandering over to a wet, miserable-looking Jason.

"I can feel you watching me."

Percy just barely heard him. He averted his eyes guiltily, tightening

his arms around his chest. "Sorry," he mumbled at the same time he forced the water pouring down on Jason's head away from him. At least he wasn't soaking wet and getting rained on anymore.

Jason was quiet for a while before heaving a heavy sigh, like he just lost some internal argument he was having with himself. He raised his head up and looked at Percy.

"Come here."

"What?"

"Shut up and just get over here," he said sternly.

Percy thought about ignoring him, but in the end his curiosity won out and he inched across the deck until the water-made umbrellas he'd created merged into one large one.

Jason lifted his arm silently and Percy hesitated for just a second before allowing himself to be tucked underneath it, pressed against Jason's warm side.

He hadn't realized how cold he'd been until that moment. Tightly wound muscles involuntarily relaxed and a sense of contentment washed over him.

A sense of right. Of *belonging.*

It wasn't just the warmth that gave him those feelings.

Huddled there, under a thin layer of protective water, Percy felt like the world had righted itself again. All the dread, the worry, the anger, the sadness, all of it from the last few days seemed so inconsequential now.

In that moment, Percy could pretend like things had never changed between him and Jason. They'd never said those biting, venomous words. Words Percy didn't mean. Words he'd take back, if he could.

Was what happened between them to drive them apart more important than what drew them together in the first place?

No.

Gods , he was so fucking *lost* . How was he supposed to pretend everything was normal and fine?

Years of laughter and fighting, of friendship and love- *yes* of course love, how could he have been so blind all that time?- was he really going to just let all of that go?

Over what?

What were they *really* mad about?

.

.

.

.

Nothing.

There was *nothing.*

Because nothing is what a life without Jason would be like.

But Percy didn't want *nothing* , he wanted *everything.*

He wanted his friend back.

He wanted his love back.

Percy startled out of his thoughts when a large water droplet splashed onto the back of his hand.

He looked down at it in bewilderment. The water umbrella was perfectly intact, not a flaw or hole anywhere to be seen, so how had this drop got in?

Another one landed right next to the first and Percy finally registered

that the drops were *warm*.

"Hey, are you okay?" Jason suddenly asked, grabbing his chin and gently turning his face up so he could see it better.

"I'm fine," is what Percy *tried* to say. Instead, it came out as a strangled gasp and Percy realized he was *crying*. He tried to speak again as Jason looked on in growing worry and panic, but a sob escaped him in lieu of words.

"Percy, what is it?! Are you hurt?!"

"I-I'm sorry," he choked out. " *About everything*. "

Love And A Lobster

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the late update! Got busy with the fic exchange and then directly after that, my wife ended up getting injured on our vacation around valentine's day so I kind of put everything on the back burner until she was better.

How did she injure herself you ask?

Wife about to step into the hotub: "haha watch me fall into this pool."

Me, already in the hotub: "honey don't, please use the stairs."

Wife: "Nah, I'll be fine!"

proceeds to unintentionally slip and fall into the hotub, tearing a ligament in her knee

We laugh about it now lol, but she was so embarrassed that she'd joked about it seconds before it happened.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Percy's POV

Jason held him by the shoulders, an arms length away, his eyebrows drawn together.

Percy didn't know what he was thinking, but it didn't matter much. Confusion, deliberation, anger…whatever it was, all Jason had to do was listen.

He swallowed back the trepidation. “I should have said that a long time ago, and I know ‘sorry’ doesn’t fix everything, but I *am.* I was stupid, and scared, but that doesn’t mean it gave me the right to say the things I did, or…or leave you that night.” Percy could feel the little tremors running down his arms and hear the shaky breaths he was drawing too quickly, but he’d started talking and now the words seemed to be crawling up his throat in their haste to be said. “Especially since it was me who went to you and it was *me* who suggested we do what we did, a-and then it was too much, because I was scared of what I was feeling towards you and I-” his rant was interrupted because he lungs burned for air, but as soon as he’d gulped some down his mouth opened and the words were spilling out again. “I ran because I didn’t know how to deal with it, but I should’ve *stayed!* Gods, I’m so *stupi-* ”

This time it was Jason who cut him off by drawing him close and crushing him to his chest, his long arms wrapping securely around his back, like he wasn’t ever going to let him go again.

“I’m sorry, too, Percy, but stop it,” Jason pleaded softly into his hair. “Stop saying that. You’re not stupid.”

“B-But I-”

“ *I was scared, too* .” Jason breathed. “But most of all, I was scared I’d lost you for good.”

Percy’s fingers had gone numb from where they were clenched in the back of Jason’s shirt, but he wouldn’t let go of him for anything. Gaea herself could’ve materialized in front of him, but he wouldn’t so much as lift a finger even to flip her off.

“Some of what we said during our fights…” Percy muttered, burying his face into Jason’s neck like it would hide him from the world.

“They were ugly things. Things we can’t take back.”

Jason was quiet for a moment, his breaths slow and even. Percy took comfort from that, feeling his own start to match their pace.

Once the trembling in Percy’s arms had finally abated, and he wasn’t gasping down air anymore, Jason spoke again.

“I know,” he started, leaning his head back so he could peer down at him. Percy reluctantly unburied his face and looked up. Jason’s eyes were startlingly blue, like always. “Although I *don’t* know if I’m willing to let that ruin what we could have. We obviously have…a lot to discuss, but we can work it out if we try. I *want* to try. I want…” Jason trailed off, sounding nervous as he chewed on his bottom lip.

Percy’s insides squirmed. “What? What do you want, Jason?”

“Well, I…you.”

“Me?” he asked, trying not to crack a smile at the corny situation.

“ *Yes,* ” Jason said, rolling his eyes as a light flush bloomed across his pale cheeks. “Everything that happened with Annabeth and Piper, now that we know a lot more about it, that they-that we didn’t…do anything that would hurt them, we weren’t unfaithful, it…” Jason paused to take a breath and collect his thoughts. “What I’m trying to say is, I like you, Percy. Like, *a lot.* Probably an unhealthy amount. But what I feel for you is real. And now we aren’t burdened by the constant anxiety of thinking we wronged Piper and Annabeth, and it really gave me some perspective.”

Percy swallowed, enjoying the warmth that spread through his body at hearing Jason say he liked him. “That’s…I like you, too,” he said lamely, feeling like those words didn’t quite encompass the whole of what he actually felt towards this man.

Jason shook his head and smiled a bit. “No, Percy, I…well just buckle up because I’m about to get really cheesy, okay?”

“I like cheese,” he quipped automatically, his natural inclination to bring humor into situations unable to rest even now.

Jason looked like he wanted to roll his eyes again, but graciously resisted. “Can I finish embarrassing myself now, or did you have anything else to say?”

Percy sealed his lips together and waited for him to continue.

Eventually Jason huffed fondly and brought one of his hands around to gently stroke his thumb across Percy’s cheek as he cupped his face. He leaned into the touch, half worried he was going to wake up from some cruel dream and have this moment shattered.

But Jason’s palm was warm and rough, leaving a tingling sensation in its wake as it slid down to rest on the base of his neck where it met his shoulder. Percy watched Jason’s throat bob as he prepared to speak.

“I’ve never felt like this about anyone else,” he whispered quietly after a bit. “I’m being truthful. It’s different from what it was like when I thought I loved Piper like this. I was wrong, *so wrong.* I didn’t realize for a long time why I always wanted to be around you, whenever I could. I thought maybe…no, actually I *didn’t* think, and that was the problem. Deep down I probably knew it wasn’t normal friend feelings, but I ignored it. Or…not ignored, but I think I was just content. I

didn't know it could be like this," Jason idly ran his thumb over Percy's skin, giving him goosebumps, "if I actually faced my problems and let myself be happy for once."

"You're right," Percy choked out. "This is really cheesy."

Jason winced. "Too cheesy?"

Percy shook his head. "I told you, I like cheese," he laughed wetly.

"In that case," Jason continued. "I wanted to tell you that I love you. I meant it that first night we spent together, in the motel, and I mean it now."

He knew it was coming, but it still made his heart race like crazy, hearing Jason say it for the first time since their wedding night. "Is it extra cheesy if I told you I loved you, too?"

"Yeah. Like, Hallmark cheesy. But that's alright."

"You like cheese, too?"

"I'm lactose intolerant." Jason said seriously.

A bubble of laughter erupted out of him before he could help it. "Sorry," he said quickly, covering his mouth with a hand. "Are you really?"

Jason's scarred lips twitched before parting in a grin. "No, I'm just joking."

Percy gave him a playful shove to the shoulder before fixing him with a level look. "All jokes aside, we've got so much we need to talk about, Jason. I'm not going to avoid it this time, I promise. I do love you, and I don't want to leave anything bad between us from the last couple of days, if we plan to try this out for the long run."

Jason gathered up Percy's hands in his own and pressed his lips to them, letting his eyes slide closed as if he was simply enjoying the physical closeness of him. "You're right," he murmured against his fingers, and with a start Percy realized he'd pressed his lips to their wedding rings. "But I've had enough emotional strain this last week to last a lifetime. Can we, just for a bit, put that on the back burner? I'm not avoiding it, I swear, I just want to… *exist* …peacefully right now. We both acknowledged we need to discuss everything, and we *will*. I'm so tired, Percy. Just exist with me right now, okay?"

"Okay," he finally agreed. "I'd like that."

They held each other close, enjoying the simplicity of being two people with nothing but time on their hands. Their heads rested on each other's shoulders, the deafening roar of the rain pouring down on their water umbrella surprisingly calming.

He wasn't sure how long they sat together, doing absolutely nothing but existing, but eventually they had to start dealing with reality again.

A particularly chilly gust of wind cut through the ambient warmth surrounding Jason and Percy shivered.

“We should probably get off this deck soon,” Jason commented, noticing the way Percy shied away from the wind.

“You think Leo will let us back in?” Percy scoffed.

“No, but it’ll be easy to do it ourselves,” Jason said offhandedly.

Percy drew back sharply in surprise. “Excuse me?” he demanded. “Why didn’t you say something earlier?”

Jason looked away sheepishly and shrugged. “We weren’t talking when we first got kicked out, and…it’s not the most ideal way to get in the ship.”

“Why didn’t *you* go back in then?”

“I didn’t want to leave you out here alone…it’s, uh, pretty high up and you don’t particularly like heights, so…yeah.”

Percy blinked, stunned. “So you just sat up here, getting soaking wet, even though you knew a way back inside?”

“I didn’t want you to be alone,” Jason protested, climbing to his feet. “And you won’t like how we have to do it, so I didn’t want to suggest it when we were mad at each other because there’s no way you would have agreed to it then.” Jason’s eyes shiftily darted over the side of the ship, and a shiver that had absolutely nothing to do with the temperature ran down his spine.

“Ah,” Percy said, understanding Jason’s reluctance in suggesting it. “You want to go in a window.”

It wasn’t a question but Jason answered anyway. “Yeah. It’s pretty much the only way to do it, but don’t worry, I won’t let you fall. I’ve done it plenty of times over the last few days when, ah, when we were avoiding each other. I always leave my window unlocked, so…” he trailed off, scratching idly at the back of his neck.

Percy heaved an enormous sigh and put his hands on his hips. “Alright,” he said, giving one sharp nod. “But what’s stopping Leo from just evicting us again?”

If Jason was surprised at his easy agreement, he didn’t comment on it. “He doesn’t have to know, we’ll just avoid him until he’s cooled off. When that’ll be, I’ve honestly got no clue. We could just hide until we get back to Camp if we need to.”

Percy made a displeased face and Jason nodded sympathetically. “I know, Percy. But it might be the best option. With how slow we have to go because of Festus’ repairs, it could still be two or three days till we get home.”

“What?” Percy asked suddenly.

“I said it might be our best-”

“No, the other part.”

“About Festus?” At Percy’s nod, he said, “I asked Leo earlier before we set off how it was going. He said we can only go cruising speed

because Festus wasn't fixed enough yet. He said it might be a couple of days till we get home. Apparently Festus is still pretty messed up."

"Cruising speed? We're going that slow?" he asked, bewildered, watching the clouds speed by, the rain coming in practically sideways.

"Yeah," Jason confirmed. "I know it feels fast, but it's really not."

That wasn't what had been itching at the back of Percy's brain. *Apparently Festus is still pretty messed up.*

"What?" Jason asked.

Percy shook his head, trying to think. He hadn't really been paying that much attention to the ship lately on account of everything else, but…

"That's not right," Percy mumbled, squatting down to lay his hand flat against the deck. Normally he never had anything to do with the *Argo II'* s workings because it was Leo's masterpiece and Percy simply wasn't needed. But that didn't mean he *couldn't* feel the ship. It *was* a ship, after all.

He was always aware of it, even if it was nothing but a vague thought at the very back of his mind, ignored and unneeded, but *there* nonetheless.

When Festus had first been damaged a few days ago, Percy had felt how messed up the ship had been. It was almost a subconscious awareness, like how you knew your heart was beating, but didn't have to think about it for it to work.

Distracted as he'd been the last few days, Percy hadn't paid any mind to it, but now that Jason mentioned it, Percy realized he hadn't felt the malfunctions for a while now.

He let his senses flow down through the ship and, sure enough, he *knew* the engines were perfectly fine.

Scaled down to a fraction of their normal size, yes, but there were no interruptions in the flow of its workings. It perhaps wouldn't be able to keep top speed for days at a time, but it would take maybe eight hours to get to Camp from here at full speed and Festus was more than capable of doing that.

"He lied, didn't he?" Jason asked, annoyed, once Percy had stood back up. He didn't even have to confirm it. Jason pinched the bridge of his nose and squeezed his eyes shut. "I should've known."

"I'm sure if we talk to him and show him we made up, he'd quit fucking with us." Percy said.

"No," Jason eventually huffed. "I don't want to talk to him right now. But…I *do* want to get back to Camp soon." He sighed in frustration.

The thought popped into Percy's head and flew out of his mouth before he had time to process it. "Why don't we hijack the ship and speed it up ourselves?"

Jason slowly turned and raised an eyebrow at him. "How long do you think Leo would let us live if we even *tried* that?"

It was a dumb idea, highly illogical, but…doable? Either way, it was too late now, Percy's brain had taken that idea and strapped it to rocket propelled roller skates, it was bouncing around in his head so fast.

And Leo had helped to make it perfect.

"I think I can shut the blast shields around the control room if we can get there," he said, a slow smile spreading across his face. "Lock him out of the control room like he locked us out here."

"Um, except the fact that he put every single bolt and wire into this ship, and if you think he won't tear them apart to get to us if we're fucking around in the control room, then you clearly don't know Leo. Not to mention the remote he keeps on him at all times. He could override the shield just like that." Jason snapped his fingers, looking at Percy like he was crazy.

"You think I can't keep the shields closed from the control room? This *is* a ship, you know. And I *am* the ship guy."

"You'll be a dead guy if you try to take Leo's ship from him," Jason stated plainly.

Percy chewed his lip and tried to let Jason's rationale talk him out of it. "Festus might be a problem…" he admitted. "But it's not like I'm taking it permanently, I'm just…borrowing it. Only until we get to Camp."

"You're a pirate," Jason said, an unimpressed look on his face.

“And *you’re* the worst mutiny partner ever.”

Jason rolled his eyes, but it was clear he was fighting a smile. “We’d have better odds just talking to him, like you first suggested.”

“Oh come on, Jason,” Percy whined. “They’ve been hovering over us this whole time, sticking their noses in our business. Don’t you want to just get away from them and prove we don’t need babysitters?”

“You know they just care about us. They’ve gone out of their way to help, and it wasn’t even their problem.”

“ *I know,* ” Percy admitted, feeling a little guilty. “But I…I kind of want to do this. I’ve felt so useless this whole trip.”

Jason crossed his arms, his eyes wide. “Are you telling me to help you do this insane idea just because you’re…what, *bored?* ”

Percy tsked, reaching out to uncross Jason’s arms and fitting himself in their place. “ *Live a little,* ” he said, smiling up at him. “You know you wanna get back at him for kicking us out.”

“We kinda deserved it…” Jason reminded him.

When Percy did nothing but shrug and quirk an eyebrow, Jason exhaled through his nose and looked away.

It was a poor way to try and hide his smile. Percy saw it clear as day.

“You know this is crazy.”

“I do.”

“…I will *only* do this if you can somehow get Leo’s remote on the way to the control room.”

“Yes!” Percy exclaimed.

“ *Without* him noticing,” Jason added. “Or Frank. He seems to be everywhere Leo is these days.”

“Oh, this is *such* a bad idea,” Percy laughed, and Jason joined him.

“Trust me, I know.”

The journey off the ship and into Jason’s bedroom window went surprisingly smoother than Percy expected. It probably had something to do with Jason’s strong, steady arms holding him tightly, all the way down the side of the ship.

They tumbled in through the window and onto the bed in a heap of hushed laughter, recklessness making them both giddy.

Percy almost let himself get distracted when Jason kissed him once, quickly, before pausing and moving back in for a slower kiss. Percy marveled at how easily they showed affection now that the poisonous

cloud above them had been cleared up. It felt so… *right.*

He kissed Jason back eagerly, pouring all the emotions that were hard to say into the kiss.

It probably would have gone further than just kissing, had it not been for Guido.

Frantic, hissing bubbles and excited knocking made them both break away from the kiss and turn to look at the bedside table where the noises were coming from.

Guido was…well Percy wasn't quite sure *what* Guido was doing, but waves of happiness radiated off of the little crustacean.

For the first time in days, Guido connected to his mind, and Percy felt the little lobster-shaped knot of worry in his chest ease.

Lord! Oh, it is you! Oh- what Guido said next could only be described as unintelligible noises.

"Hey, Guido," Percy greeted him warmly, climbing off Jason and getting to his feet.

Guido did a little scuttling dance-like move that made the water in his bowl splash around alarmingly. His large front pincers waved around above the waterline erratically.

Am I dreaming? No, this is real. I am so happy to see you, my lord. To see

you happy *and with your mate again! Have you finally come to your senses?*

He let the little barb slide. “Yeah, we’re done fighting,” Percy told him, squeezing Jason’s hand when he slipped it into his.

“Hey, little buddy,” Jason said, giving the lobster a little wave.

Guido scuttled up the side of his bowl and hooked his pincers under the edge to hold himself up.

This truly is a wonderful day. You have no idea how much this guy moped around when you were fighting. He talks sometimes at night when he’s bored. All ‘woe is me, I miss Percy, Guido do you think I should talk to him? Blah blah blah’. It made me sad, lord, because I could not tell him what I thought!

Percy exhaled a small laugh. “Guido says you talk a lot when you’re bored.”

Jason’s ears pinked slightly. “Yeah, I kinda ranted to him a few times.”

Guido’s antennae quivered frantically and his beady little eyes pleaded up at Percy. He exhaled in amusement again and gave the lobster what he so desperately wanted.

“Here,” he said to Guido, holding the back of his hand close to the bowl so Guido could reach out and investigate his scent by running his antennae all over his skin.

“What are you doing?” Jason asked, interest coloring his tone.

“It’s been a while since we saw each other. He’s making sure I’m okay,” Percy explained, trying to ignore the ticklish appendages as they roamed around his hand.

Jason made a high pitched noise in the back of his throat and at Percy’s questioning look, said, “That’s adorable.”

“He’s a worry wart,” Percy rolled his eyes, scratching the back of his hand once Guido was done with his fretting, but he missed the little guy a lot and the touch was just as comforting to him as it was to Guido.

You are happy, Guido stated, sounding relieved and relaxed. He released his hold on the edge of the bowl and let himself slip back down into the water, settling on the bottom, humming quietly to himself.

“Well,” Jason said, straightening up from the hunch he’d been in while they were talking to Guido. “Looks like he’s done talking for now.”

Percy reached over and scratched the back of Guido’s shell anyways, happy when the lobster arched into it.

“Alright,” Percy said, taking his hand back. “Let’s go.”

Jason followed him out of the room, tiptoeing down the hallway as quietly as they could. Percy nearly jumped out of his skin when a loud noise boomed out from behind Coach Hedge’s door, but he quickly

realized it was just whatever sports game the Coach was watching at the moment.

Things in the ship were very quiet other than that. Most everyone was probably in their rooms.

“-fix this damn sink.” A voice grumbled from the direction of the kitchen.

Everyone except Leo.

A quiet chuckle followed up and they heard a second voice say, “It won’t take very long. I’ll help you fix it.”

And Frank, apparently.

He grinned at Jason and gestured towards the kitchen door with his chin, putting a finger to his lips. When they reached the door and peeked around the corner, Percy couldn’t believe their luck. Leo’s utility belt was sitting on the floor next to him and Frank, just mere feet from the door, and both guys had their heads in the cupboard under the sink.

Chapter End Notes

They are talking again 🧢🧢🧢🧢🧢🧢🧢🧢

Also, Frank, Leo, how's 'fixing the sink' going there buds?

This Sink Is Never Getting Fixed

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Leo's Pov

Did he feel bad for putting Jason and Percy in time out?

No.

Did he feel bad that it was storming like crazy outside and both men were wearing summer attire?

Also no.

Tough love is, well, *tough* . But sometimes that's needed in these types of situations, and *somebody* had to be the one to dish it. It just so happened that the burden to do so had fallen on Leo.

He was okay with that.

What he *wasn't* okay with, was just how difficult this sink was being.

" *Fuck,* " he cursed for the about the fifth time. "What is wrong with this damn bolt?"

Leo unstuck himself from where his utility belt had hooked on the cupboard hinge and unclipped it from his pants, tossing it haphazardly behind him, irritated that it kept getting in the way. He sighed in frustration and stuck his head back under the sink.

Frank laughed quietly before his face appeared next to Leo's in the small space.

"It won't take very long," Frank reassured him. "I'll help you fix it."

Some of Leo's irritation evaporated, and he playfully bumped Frank's shoulder with his own. "We won't be fixing anything if you get us both stuck in here. There's barely room for one head in this cupboard."

Frank gave a brief glance around at the lack of space and Leo felt him shrug. "Then get out of here and let me finally take a look at it, then. Otherwise I'm staying right here."

Leo thought about arguing with him, but then rationalized that a second opinion never hurt anything and backed himself out of the cupboard.

"Here," he said, handing Frank the flashlight once they were both sitting up straight again. "The problem is, I can't tell why the U joint connection bolt won't loosen, and if I don't loosen it, then I can't replace the pipe that got split in half. It can't be rusty, it's too new, but it just won't *turn*. "

Frank nodded like he understood and then laid down on his back, reaching under the sink to pull his upper half into the cupboard so he could see better. He was quiet for a minute while the light swayed back and forth across the pipes.

"This one here?" Frank asked after another stretch of silence, followed by him tapping against something metal with the flashlight.

"Hang on, let me see," Leo said, tilting his head to try and see what Frank was indicating, but it was too sharp of an angle. He was going to have to go further in. "Hold still, I gotta get a closer look," he told him before carefully inching into the space above Frank.

Sandwiched between Frank's chest and the piping of the sink, Leo turned his head to the side and looked up. "Okay, it's that one," Leo said, worming one of his arms in as well to point at the correct bolt.

"Cool, I was right," Frank said, self-satisfied. "But you're right, there doesn't look like anything is wrong with it," he added, one side of his mouth turning down at the corner. "Maybe it's just on too tight. Hand me the wrench, I'll try to turn it."

"Careful not to strip it," he cautioned, handing over the wrench.

"Righty tighty, lefty loosey?" Frank joked as he positioned the wrench around the bolt.

"Har har," he drawled. "But yes. Although at this point I might have to just cut it o-" Frank tried to hide his grin by covering his mouth as the wrench turned and the bolt loosened with barely any force whatsoever. " *W-What?!* How did you do that?" He demanded, forcing his head in closer to Frank's, trying to see better.

Frank's solid chest rumbled beneath him with laughter. "I just turned the wrench!"

"No. No, that thing was practically *glued* on there! How did you get it that easily?!" Leo glared down at Frank while the big guy tried and failed to stifle his amusement.

"Maybe you loosened it for me," Frank teased, accidentally dropping the flashlight at the same time. "Oh shit, sorry! Here- let me just-"

"Wait, Frank don't-" Leo tried to leave the cupboard first, but in the semi-darkness he placed his palm on the flashlight and slipped.

He tumbled down on top of Frank, who instinctively caught him, holding him close with the one arm that wasn't wedged above them.

Frank was still laughing like he couldn't help it. The sound was infectious, and soon Leo started giggling too, even as he worked with Frank to inch them out of the cupboard.

Once free, Frank propped his back up against the counter, an arm still casually draped around Leo's back. He didn't move away, too busy catching his breath as their amusement died down slowly.

"Thanks for helping," Leo said, looking up at Frank when he could speak again. "But you didn't have to make it look so easy."

Mirth twinkled in Frank's dark eyes as he met his gaze. "You're welcome." His voice was quieter than before, lined with something soft that made a jittering jolt of nerves worm through Leo's stomach.

He was suddenly very aware of how close they were, of how uneven

Frank's breaths were, his large chest rising and falling at a rate that was quicker than it should've been.

"Oh, I, um-" Leo should move. He should untangle himself from Frank and stand up.

Frank swallowed, his arm tightening almost imperceptibly, like he sensed Leo's thoughts but didn't want to let him go just yet.

There was a stretch of time, he didn't know how long, that they watched each other, both uncertain and nervous. Or maybe it was just him that was feeling that? Was Frank simply sitting there wondering why Leo was staring at him like some kind of weirdo, practically sitting in his lap?

Either way, all of a sudden, Leo was being kissed.

He was being kissed, and it was *Frank* who was kissing him.

He was kissing Frank.

Was that what they were doing here, with their lips pressed gently together, hearts pounding erratically? Did this count? Maybe he'd just slipped again and Frank would pull away soon, laughing it off awkwardly, never to mention it again in the name of saving their friendship.

From somewhere behind him he thought he heard a small squeak, and a tiny, ADHD fueled brain cell filed a mental note to check the ship for mice when he got the time, but for right now his brain was pretty preoccupied. Leo's mind raced faster than it had in a while, thoughts

and doubts cruising around his brain like they were driving in the Indie 500, taking left turns like their lives depended on it.

Oh *gods,* he needed to *move away* before this got even more awkward.

But it was *Frank* who had moved first. It was! Leo was sure!

Frank had leaned forwards, had tilted his head and-

Oh.

Oh .

They were *still* kissing.

The corner of Frank's mouth tilted up ever so slightly under his lips, like he was watching the mess Leo's brain was making of itself and found it hilarious.

Frank slowly pulled back, his free hand brushing a few curls off Leo's cheek for him. "I think," Frank whispered to him, "maybe you're thinking too much right now."

Leo parted his lips to speak but realized he didn't have anything ready to say, so he closed his mouth again quickly, before realizing at the last minute he *did* actually have something to say. "Hazel?" Her name tumbled out in a jumbled rush, like he was choking on it.

Frank shook his head quickly, a reassuring smile on his face. "We're not to-"

"You're not?"

"Not for a while, no. Guess it never came up, sorry."

"Probably should've, I mean, before randomly kissing me," Leo blurted out.

"Was it?" Frank questioned jovially, tracing the curve of Leo's cheekbone.

It made it hard to *think* . "Was it- *what* ?" He asked, distracted by the way Frank's eyes were flicking back and forth as he studied Leo up close.

"Random. Maybe it was, but I- was that okay? To kiss you?"

And for once, Leo's thoughts weren't scattered around his head like angry buzzing wasps, because Frank's wide, sincere eyes were asking him something *important,* and Leo didn't want to mess this up.

He nodded once, jerkily, before crashing his lips down on Frank's again, who made a surprised noise deep in his throat before getting with the program.

Leo couldn't hear anything past the pounding of his own heart, but that was okay, kissing didn't require much talking.

Without pulling away, Frank shifted them, his arm supporting Leo's weight until he found himself with his back against the floor, a gentle hand beneath his head.

Frank's hot, wet tongue tentatively swept across his bottom lip, sending a writhing tendril of *something* through Leo's stomach.

He'd never been kissed like this before, his only previous experience being a few clumsy pressing of lips here and there.

His whole body felt like it was on fire, and Leo had a panicked moment where he forced himself to not *actually* burst aflame. That would be…bad to say the least.

He steeled his nerves and parted his lips, meeting Frank's tongue with his own and-

Okay.

Okay, so *this* is what the fuss was all about. Now all those times he'd turned the corner at Camp and seen two people making out like their lives depended on it made sense. He felt like a drowning man, but it wasn't air he was craving.

Frank seemed just as desperate, his breaths coming in short, heaving pants when they parted for oxygen briefly before licking back into his mouth. Deft, warm fingers dipped under his shirt, trailing up his side and Leo's entire body erupted into goosebumps. At some point he'd threaded his own fingers into the back of Frank's short hair.

His shirt rode up as Frank's hand roamed, exposing his stomach, and holy *fuck* he'd never seen Frank act like this. It was intoxicating, because it was him at the center of Frank's attention, it was *him* that was causing the pink flush spreading across Frank's neck and cheeks.

Leo wasn't sure how far they would've taken things, had Festus not interrupted them.

Skrrrr reeee ereeek treeeeak!

They broke apart, startled out of their little bubble.

"W-What did he say?" Frank asked, looking thoroughly disheveled, eyes unfocused.

"I don't-" Leo started, pausing to catch his breath. "I wasn't listening, I don't know." Festus yelled at him through the speaker again, and it took his brain a second to catch up with everything. "They- *what?* " He exclaimed, sitting up quickly when Frank leaned back for him. His head spun from the abrupt movement.

Festus, with all the patience of an irritated parent, squealed out his warning again.

Leo's head whipped around, but his belt was already gone.

"Leo what's wrong?" Frank worriedly asked.

Leo swallowed and accepted the hand Frank extended to help him up.

"Percy and Jason are back in the ship," he bit out, already heading towards the door. "They’re on their way to the control room. And they have my belt."

hacker voice "I'm In"

Chapter Notes

a short one, i know, but it's been a rough couple of weeks for me. Not only was I doing another fic exchange, but me and my wife's anniversary was the other day, which was lovely, but her ailing grandfather ended up passing away on it. I won't go into a bunch of details, but know we're okay and I appreciate everyone's patience with these updates!

-Present Time- *Argo II* -

Jason's POV

Jason kept a watchful eye on Leo and Frank as Percy inched his arm into the kitchen, reaching for Leo's abandoned tool belt.

He yanked him out of sight when the guys were rearranging their position so Frank could take a look at the pipes, but neither of them seemed to be paying much attention to their surroundings, so he let Percy try for the belt again.

This time he managed to hook a finger through the buckle and silently drag it out of the kitchen.

They froze again when Leo started shouting about something, nearly drowned out by Frank's boisterous laughter.

Percy jerked his head in the direction of the hallway, indicating that they should take their leave while the noise covered any sounds they might make, and Jason nodded, halfway to his feet when a quick glance back into the kitchen stopped him short.

Percy, still on his knees, turned to look at what had captured his interest.

Leo was…well he was straddling Frank's lap, clearly, but he also had his head tilted down, exposing his new undercut and tattoo. They were kissing.

Jason blinked, stunned.

Percy let out a tiny sound of astonishment.

Jason yanked him away from the door and covered his mouth quickly. Glaring down at him, he placed a silent finger to his own lips.

Percy stuck his tongue out and wiggled it between Jason’s fingers, successfully getting him to take his hand back.

" *Dick,* " he whispered around the stupid grin on his face as he shoved Percy away from him.

"Uh oh," Percy said quietly, peeping around the door frame again. "Looks like things are getting spicy. We better get out of here before we accidentally see something we don't want to."

"Spicy?" Jason mouthed at him curiously before stealing a glance at their friends again. Frank had Leo on his back, shirt hiked up around his ribs, with one hand roaming over the newly exposed skin of Leo's stomach. Jason quickly looked away. "Spicy indeed. Let's go while they're distracted."

On their way past the dining room, Jason paused just long enough to snatch up their wedding album, which had been dangerously close to falling off the table. Percy gave him a curious look, but Jason just shrugged and tucked it under an arm, motioning for him to lead the way.

Once they were far enough away from the kitchen, Percy stopped and turned to face the wall, his eyebrows scrunching together in thought.

“What?” Jason asked. “What are we doing here?”

“If we take the main entrance to the control room someone might see us and alert Leo before we get there,” he explained, using his knuckles to tap experimentally on the wall in a few different places. “Leo has secret tunnels all over this place, I just have to find…aha!” he exclaimed as a small square of the wall pressed inwards, sliding to the left to reveal a narrow passageway.

“Impressive,” Jason breathed.

“Thanks,” Percy grinned. “I can sense most of them if I’m close enough since they’re technically part of the ship. Come on, let’s hurry. I have no idea where Festus is, but it’s only a matter of time before he sees us.”

Jason followed Percy into the tunnel, marveling at the automatic way the hidden door slid shut once they’d gotten far enough inside. “Can Festus shut you out of the controls?” he questioned as they edged their way through the walls of the ship.

Percy hummed in thought as he took another turn. “In theory, yes,” he

said finally. “I can’t control Festus, he’s his own separate entity apart from the ship itself, and I’m pretty sure Leo gave him full access to everything essential. However,” Percy added quickly, “I can hold him off long enough to find his access point and shut it off. I think.”

“You think?” Jason asked, raising an eyebrow.

“You act like I’ve hijacked a lot of Dragon-operated mechanical flying ships before. Give me a break here, I-” Percy stopped dead in his tracks, eyes snapping up to one of the few cameras in the secret tunnels. It slowly swiveled around and pointed directly at them. “ *Festus,* ” Percy whispered. “That’s not good, we have to go.” A loud siren cut through the air, accompanied by flashing red lights. “Now,” Percy added, taking off into a sprint.

“He’s calling Leo,” Jason huffed, ducking to avoid a low hanging pipe. “How long will it take him to get here?”

“Depends on what route he takes,” Percy said as he panted for breath. “This is the fastest from the dining room, so he’s probably behind us.”

As if on cue, Leo’s voice echoed from far away in the tunnel. “ *Percy Jackson! Keep your hands off my fucking ship!* ”

“Why is he only yelling at *me* ?” Percy complained as they took another turn and the tunnel came to an end with a door.

“I have best friend immunity,” Jason joked, accepting the tool belt Percy handed to him as he heaved the lever for the door down.

“ *Jason, do not let him do this!* ”

“Oof, looks like that only goes so far,” Percy snickered, holding the door open for him and gesturing through it. “After you,” he said jovially.

They clambered through the small door and turned around just in time to see Leo appear at the end of the straight stretch in the tunnel. He looked *mad* . Jason threw him an apologetic smile as he heaved the door shut, slotting the emergency lock down into its spot.

Angry little fists pounded on the other side seconds later, but it didn’t budge. The pounding stopped, only to be followed up by the sound of what he thought were planks being torn off the wall.

“Percy,” he said warningly. “I think he’s trying to get to the door mechanism through the wall.”

Percy had rushed to the large control board the second they’d entered the room, hurriedly running his hands over every button, lever, and dial there was to touch, presumably getting a feel for what they all did.

Now, he glanced over his shoulder, fingers stilling on a little panel set off to the side, away from all the rest. “I found the blast shield activation. Step away from the door.”

He did as he was asked, jumping a tad as a thick, heavy metal plate slid down from the ceiling, effectively sealing the door shut. Percy played with a few more switches on the stand alone panel and, one by one, the three other entrances to the control were sealed off as well.

“That’s taken care of,” Percy mumbled, turning back to the main

controls. “Now to block Festus’ access to this room.”

Festus, apparently, didn’t like that plan, because his squeaky voice screeched at them over the intercom and one of the blast shields drew itself back up into the ceiling. Thankfully not the one Leo was currently trying to bust through, but it was only a matter of time before he got the right one.

“Oh, no you don’t,” Percy gritted out, sending the shield back down. He knelt and opened the paneling underneath the controls, thrusting his hand inside to feel around in the wires. “I need your help, Jason. Come here.”

Percy pulled out a wire seemingly at random and offered it to him. “What am I supposed to do with this?” he asked.

Percy winced before saying, “Overload the circuits.”

“Is this-”

“It’s just Festus’ main line. It won’t hurt him, just cut off his access to the rest of the ship.”

Jason grabbed the wire and raised an eyebrow at Percy. “Are you sure?”

Percy hesitated, reaching out to touch the wire again. “Yes,” he said eventually.

Still Jason didn't fry the line. "What if we just cut it?"

Percy bit his lip and glanced back into the wires under the control board. "Leo might be able to rewire him back into the system, but… for now it should be enough." He took his sword out and uncapped it, using the blade to cut the wire.

"I'd rather limit the damage we do," Jason explained gratefully. "The *Argo II* has been injured enough on this trip."

"That's fair," Percy said, kicking the access door shut and standing up to hover over the controls again. Jason joined him, having no clue what any of the switches or buttons did. Percy seemed to be slowly deciphering them, his hands ghosting over everything, pausing now and then before continuing on.

He left him to it, not wanting to distract him, and instead decided to search the rest of the room.

Aside from a few loose trinkets Leo must've been working on and twisted lump of metal propped up in the corner, it was pretty much barren. Deciding to leave Leo's projects alone, he wandered over to the metal, kneeling down next to it in order to see it better.

Why had Leo kept this?

It wasn't like him to hold onto things that had no function and whatever had happened to this… *thing* was far from being fixable. Jason picked the metal up and stood, turning it over as he inspected it closer. There was a slick residue clinging to part of it, a golden shine that was just barely noticeable, and other sections were blackened like it had been near a fire or explosion, which, with Leo around, wasn't actually that uncommon.

But the last time something had exploded was when the engine malfunctioned.

He hefted the metal, feeling the immense weight to it, turning it over again. The new angle cast a shadow across one of the flatter pieces and Jason could just make out something raised there.

It was writing, or more specifically, a number: *48”* .

It dawned on him what he was holding. This was Leo’s four foot long pipe wrench that he kept secured in the top floor of the engine room. And by *secured* he meant with a lock to keep it from sliding around while the ship was in movement. No one but Leo had a key to it, and he *always* made sure everything was braced before take off.

“Percy,” he breathed, looking up, a wave of incredibility washing over him, turning his hands clammy.

“Hm?” Percy asked, not turning around, busy with a dial and switch combo.

“No, Percy… *look.* ” That made him turn, a confused frown on his face when he saw the metal. Wordlessly, he handed it to him. “It’s Leo’s pipe wrench. The one from the engine room,” he added pointedly.

Percy’s scrunched eyebrows went slack in realization and his eyes flicked up to meet Jason’s. “No, he wouldn’t have-” Percy shook his head. “It probably just got damaged in the explosion.”

“You think getting flung across the room would do *that* ,” he pointed to the most twisted, crooked part.

“That still doesn’t mean Leo purposely sabotaged his own ship,” Percy argued, but he sounded like he was trying to convince himself more than anything.

Jason hoped he was wrong.

He pursed his lips and took the wrench back. “Nothing we can do about it now,” he said, setting it back in the corner of the room where he’d gotten it. “Did you figure out what you needed to do?” he asked as a distraction.

Percy tore his eyes away from the wrench and nodded. “Yeah, we’re on autopilot right now, heading back to Camp. We should be there by tomorrow afternoon,” there was an edge of nervousness to the way he spoke, but his features were determined and steady. “As long as Leo doesn’t get in here, that is.” Jason reached out and pulled Percy closer by his arm. He came willingly, a questioning eyebrow raised as Jason’s arms wrapped around him. Percy's lips twitched as he looked up at him. “What?”

He kissed him in lew of an answer, a warm bubble of affection rising in his chest with how easy and right it felt to do this, just because he wanted to. He didn’t have to deny himself this anymore.

Percy accepted the kiss enthusiastically, his body pressing closer.

Leo’s fists banging on the blast shield startled them out of it.

They couldn't hear anything he was saying, it was too muffled, but they got the point. Festus had told him he'd been evicted.

Eventually, Percy sat down with his back against the wall, tugging Jason down with him. "I guess we wait," he said simply.

What seemed like hours later, after Leo had given up on trying to get in, Percy stood up again and checked the time. He retrieved Leo's tool belt and stuck his hand in it, producing the remote controller for the ship.

Jason tilted his head at him from his place on the floor.

Percy grinned, waving the remote. "I think everyone's gone to sleep now. Wanna go take a shower?"

We Are

Chapter Notes

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

There are two chapters and an epilogue left after this chapter and then this story is finished! Seems so surreal!

Percy’s POV

Jason’s exasperated eye roll in no way matched his lecherous grin as he allowed Percy to pull him to his feet.

To be honest, he really hadn't suggested the shower in hopes of nefarious outcomes. He wanted to get out of these clothes and wash the salt off his face from his earlier bout of tears, but hey, guilt-free shower sex was always a plus.

The way Jason was looking at him stirred a tendril of arousal inside his stomach and he had to turn away, lest they not make it out of the control room. Leo *might* forgive them for the mutiny, but Percy very much doubted any benignancy if they defiled his control room in that way.

Then again, Leo hadn't had the decency to take *his* clandestine conduct to a private space; letting Frank put his paws all over him right in the middle of the kitchen where anyone might wander by.

But no, Percy very much did not want to continue this here, despite how hilarious Leo's face would be if he ever found out.

He wanted the scorching heat of the water, the peace it brought his

mind and body. He wanted Jason there with him, in whatever way he could have him.

"Come on," he said, leading the way to one of the blast shields. A quick press of a button on the remote had it retreating into the ceiling so they could slip into the narrow passage behind. He shut it again after, just in case Leo was prowling around somewhere.

Jason followed behind him, seemingly content in trusting Percy to know the way. He noticed he'd grabbed their wedding album before leaving again, tucking it under his arm absently.

Jason saw him looking and shrugged. "Figured I'd drop it off in my room."

Percy didn't say anything, just nodded and kept walking.

The tunnel they were taking had two exits in the residential area of the ship: one at the very end of the hallway, next to Coach Hedge's room, and the other opening directly into Leo's bedroom.

When he'd first boarded the *Argo II* all those years ago, Percy had thought that was strange, but then later realized Leo had built these passages specifically for him alone, not expecting anyone else to be able to navigate them.

Leo rarely slept in his actual room, preferring to steal a few hours of sleep wherever it was he'd been working at the time, so they could probably get away with using that exit, which was closer to their own rooms. But with the way he and Frank had been all over each other earlier, Percy didn't want to risk it. Leo was already pissed at him, he didn't want to add fuel to the fire by appearing suddenly in his bedroom and possibly catching them in the middle of the hanky

panky.

He'd spare them all that embarrassment and turned towards the further exit. Luck was with them, because the long hallway was dark and silent. It made the trip to their rooms quick and efficient, and in no time they were slipping into the nearby bathroom, locking the door behind them.

The showers on board the *Argo II* weren't nearly as large and luxurious as the one in the honeymoon suite back at the hotel, but that was okay. There wasn't going to be much need for space between them.

Unsurprisingly, they didn't get much actual showering done. Percy managed to refrain himself long enough to scrub his hair out and start to soap up his body, but after that his resolve crumbled.

Jason was just too distracting. He had his back turned toward him, and Percy couldn’t help but reach out to trace the strong planes of muscle that rippled as he moved.

When his fingertips brushed against his skin, Jason hummed and moved closer, as if he were leaning into the touch. Percy stepped closer and wrapped his arms around him from behind.

Jason threw a curious glance over his shoulder.

Percy grinned, letting his hands glide over Jason’s chest, down his stomach.

"You know," he said conversationally after pressing a kiss to his shoulder blade. "It doesn’t matter if I can't see it. As long as you're in

the water, I can *feel* it." His hand drifted lower, fingertips ghosting over the evidence of Jason's arousal.

"I've always wondered that," Jason said, letting his head fall back to rest on Percy's shoulder. "I bet it's strange. And I wasn't hiding," he explained, turning his face to leave a kiss on his cheek. "Just figured you'd appreciate actually showering before I accost you."

His hands drifted lower, palms spreading across the front of Jason's thighs. "Before *you* accost *me?* " Percy asked slyly, using his grip to tug Jason closer so they were flush against each other, front to back. His own erection pressed incessantly against his stomach, trapped there by Jason's ass.

Jason gasped in surprise when Percy manhandled him roughly, his hands shooting out to steady himself against the shower wall. "Seems you beat me to it," he chuckled, voice deep and rumbly.

"You're very distracting," Percy informed him, leaving a trail of kisses across the back of his neck, smiling when Jason tipped his head forward, arching into the affection. "How am I supposed to get anything done, when I know I can do this whenever I want?"

Jason's breath sped up as Percy's hand moved back up, his fingers just barely coming into contact with his hot, heavy cock. He did nothing but let his fingers wander, running two up the underside, from the base all the way to just below the flushed head, and back down again, always a hair's breadth from actually applying any satisfying pressure.

He smirked when Jason's cock twitched, needing more than what he was giving it.

"Stop teasing me," Jason whined, panting. His hands, still bracing

himself against the wall, had clenched into half-fists, the veins standing out starkly on the backs of them.

"Aw, but it's so *fun* ," he whispered, thrusting his hips slowly, the sudsy soap creating a slippery surface for him to grind against. His cock was sliding between their bodies effortlessly and he leaned his upper half back a bit so he could watch it.

The flushed head was already leaking precum, smearing it across Jason's skin every time he moved.

Percy released a shaky breath, body twitching with the jolt of arousal that zinged through him at the sight of it disappearing and reappearing between Jason’s cheeks. The pleading, needy look on Jason’s face when he peeked over his shoulder at him certainly didn’t help matters.

"Percy, pl-"

He caved and finally wrapped his hand around Jason’s cock, stroking him with fast, decisive flicks of his wrist.

Jason pushed his ass backwards, a strangled little noise escaping him. He was pretty much holding himself up by the wall now, bent over in front of Percy like he belonged there.

A possessive little ember burned inside him at the thought.

The great Jason Grace, submitting himself to him like this, practically *begging* Percy to fuck him at this point.

And it was all his.

He didn't have to pretend he didn't want this anymore. There was no cloud of self-imposed guilt and shame hanging over his head, no one else that he needed to worry about.

He yearned to take him fully, to bury himself deep inside and feel Jason shake from the overwhelming sensation of it, and with what he could make out from Jason’s husky mumbling it was obvious he wanted it too.

But this was not the best place to do it, especially since it would be Jason’s first time in that position, and they had nothing sufficient to use as lubrication.

Instead, Percy let go of Jason’s dick long enough to push his legs together. With the next thrust he angled his hips down slightly so his cock slid into the tight space between Jason’s trembling thighs. Jason grunted and moaned softly as the length of Percy’s dick dragged against his hole with every thrust.

It felt incredible. The friction created by his taught, muscular thighs squeezing his cock combined with the pliant give of his balls around the head of his dick as it exited the other side was driving him towards the end at a much more rapid pace than he would have liked.

But they didn't need to make this last as long as possible because there would be endless opportunities ahead of them to explore this new territory. This wasn't a 'one last time' encounter; it was a precursor to all the times they'd have in the future.

All he had to do right now was enjoy himself.

So that's exactly what he did.

He was about to warn Jason that he wouldn't last much longer, but then the cock in his hand started to pulse as Jason came, letting out a pleased sigh as he did so, his back and sides heaving with the force of his breaths.

Percy only had to fuck into his thighs twice more before he, too, was tipping over the edge.

Jason slowly turned, sinking down to sit on the floor of the shower and pulling Percy with him. He hummed softly, smiling as Jason cuddled him from behind, the warm water heating the air around them with steam.

He wasn’t sure how long they sat embracing, Jason’s strong arms securely wrapped around him, but time didn’t seem to have much meaning when they were together so Percy didn’t concern himself with trying to figure it out.

Eventually, though, they’d have to get up.

Jason nuzzled into the crook of his neck and Percy’s entire body erupted in goosebumps, which made Jason laugh. The sound was tender, affectionate, and something warm squirmed inside him.

He turned his head enough to see Jason’s unguarded, honest face looking up at him.

Jason grinned and that warm thing inside him moved again.

Oh.

Percy must've stared too long without saying anything, because Jason's smile slipped and his brow furrowed in slight worry.

"What?" Jason asked concernedly.

He shook himself out of whatever lull he'd fallen into and leaned over to kiss his frown away. "Nothing, I just-...I love you," he said, his voice raw. They'd said it before a few times, and he'd meant it then too, but for some reason it hit him hard in that moment just how *much* he'd fallen for this man. "I love you," he said again, simply because he could. He'd have forever to tell Jason those words, but he worried that even forever might not be enough time to really convey how he felt.

An old Greek myth came to him suddenly. If he remembered correctly, it stated that humans were once born with four legs, four arms, and a head with two faces, but the gods, fearing their power, split them in two. They would spend their entire lives looking for their other half, always missing a part of themselves.

Percy wasn't delusional or sappy enough to actually believe in soulmates, but he did have to admit that being with Jason made him feel more complete than he'd ever been before.

Two sides of the same coin, they'd been called during the war.

Two halves of a whole being.

It was a silly thought, one he'd keep to himself because just the thought of voicing it out loud made his cheeks heat with embarrassment.

Jason exhaled through his nose in amusement and kissed him again. "I love you too," he whispered against his lips. "Now, let's dry off and get back to our mutiny before we're missed."

Percy nodded, his throat feeling too tight to speak.

Despite what Jason said, they did not go back to the control room. They swung by their rooms again to drop off their dirty clothes and towels, and the comfortable temptation of a soft bed lured them to stay.

"It's fine," Percy assured him, burrowing under Jason's blanket so he could snuggle up next to his warm husband. "They're not gonna think we left. We can sneak back in tomorrow and Leo will never know."

Jason shifted around to accommodate Percy better, letting him drape his upper body over Jason's torso so his head was tucked under his chin. Percy closed his eyes and listened to the strong, steady heartbeat in Jason's chest.

"I'm not worried," Jason assured him, running his fingers through Percy's thick hair. It was comforting, soothing enough that he knew it would lull him to sleep quickly. He was on the verge of unconsciousness when Jason's deep voice rumbled beneath him again. "I need to tell you something." His heartbeat thudded unevenly as he said it, and Percy forced himself back to wakefulness, worried slightly.

“Okay,” he said quietly, letting Jason take the time to work up whatever it was he wanted to say.

After a beat of silence Jason’s hand trailed down from Percy’s hair to rest against the curve of his back, right where his Achilles' spot used to be.

Jason swallowed audibly and Percy lifted his head enough to look at his face. Jason smiled nervously, but cleared his throat to speak.

“It’s probably going to sound ridiculous to say this now, but I’ve really been struggling over some things during the last few days,” he admitted. Percy remained silent, not wanting to interrupt. Jason pursed his lips and his eyes flicked away to stare out the window at the passing stars. “It feels stupid to think it took me so long to figure it out. I mean, I think I knew all along, but just never let myself see it.”

Percy leaned down and kissed the tip of his chin when Jason fell quiet for a few minutes, letting him know he was still listening.

Eventually, he looked back at Percy. “Percy, I’m…pretty sure I’m gay.”

Percy’s first instinct was to quip something along the lines of *‘well I sure hope you’re at least a little gay, considering some of the things we’ve done.’* but for once he held his tongue and actually thought past the first thing that ran through his brain. Something about the vulnerability in Jason’s voice, the way he had a hard time working himself up to say this, and his erratic heartbeat made Percy realize that this conversation was extremely important to Jason.

Percy had never really given much thought to his own sexuality. He

didn't have some big, sudden moment of: *so that's what it is!* when he admitted to himself that he was attracted to Jason. Even now, he was positive that women were just as appealing to him as men apparently were. It didn't cause a revelation in him when he discovered that, it was just another line of the growing list of things that made up Percy Jackson.

He never considered how Jason thought about it.

I've really been struggling over some things during the last few days. Not only had Jason been burdened with the whole marriage/cheating fiasco, but he'd also been smack in the middle of a sexuality crisis.

In hindsight, Jason being gay certainly explained a few things in his relationship with Piper, but Percy didn't think he needed to mention that. It was clear Jason had done a lot of thinking about this and probably already puzzled that out.

"I'm sorry you had to go through that alone," Percy settled on saying, folding his arms on Jason's chest to prop himself up and make it easier to peer down at him. "And it's not stupid, or ridiculous to admit it now. This is clearly important to you, and that's all that matters." He wanted to say more, to tell Jason he loved and appreciated him in every way possible, but the words didn't want to combine themselves into coherent sentences.

Jason seemed comforted nonetheless, tension leaving his body that Percy hadn't even realized he'd been carrying. The small scar on his lip stood out noticeably as he smiled gratefully up at him. "Thank you. I wasn't exactly *alone* though, I, uh, well I guess for the most I was, but…" Jason's smile turned sheepish, "I talked to Nico. I'd already figured everything out by that point, but he offered to listen, so I took him up on it."

Some of the constriction in Percy's chest eased at that, a sense of relief washing over him with the knowledge that Nico had been there for Jason when he needed it.

Jason pursed his lips then, a serious look settling over his face. "I'm pretty sure Piper knows. I'm not sure for how long, but I think she tried to talk to me about it before we left. If she *did* know, or at least guessed, why do you think she waited to bring it up? She's…I'm not blind, I know she hasn't been happy with me for a while."

Percy thought about it for a few seconds before answering, turning over the possibilities in his head to make sure he didn't say the wrong thing. "Most likely she didn't want to push you before you were ready. She probably felt that it wasn't her place to out you to yourself - if that makes any sense. There were probably better ways of going about it, but," Percy shrugged helplessly, "there's also the chance she just… didn't know what to do about it. I know I wouldn't, if I was in her place."

Jason's face turned thoughtful, but he didn't say anything more about the subject. Instead, he hummed quietly and started gently running his hand up and down Percy's back, which encouraged him to settle back down across his chest.

He fell asleep to the soothing gesture, Jason following closely behind.

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On the nightstand next to the two sleeping men, the wedding album started to glow.

Complete Remembrance

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As the men slept, they dreamed. They dreamed of everything that had been blocked off in their memories since the night they wed.

From their first sip of alcohol to falling asleep in their second hotel room, and everything in-between; it all came back to them.

The memories they'd already regained seemed to speed by, but once they'd caught up, the dream slowed down.

They watched themselves laying down in a tattoo parlor to receive their tattoos after the wedding and the Minotaur fight, the creepy Apollo Legacy triplets who'd done the art working in tandem to get everything done quicker. Afterwards, they followed themselves fleeing down darkened alleyways, running from flashing police lights after a random officer recognized Axel.

They'd ducked behind some closed fruit stands in order to hide, but Jason, drunk and unreasonable, saw a pineapple on the stand across the street and cried because he thought it was lonely. This had caused Percy to panic, vowing to rescue the fruit for him, which ended in Percy getting cuffed by the officers only to be saved by the women they'd met at Tiny's.

But he got the pineapple, which turned out to be fake, but it made Jason irrevocably happy so Percy didn't give a shit as he hoisted it in triumph when Jason picked him up to run from the cops.

He was lucky he didn't get shocked when an officer shot Jason in the thigh with a taser. It hadn't done any damage at all, just caused Jason to laugh maniacally at the dumbfounded cops before bolting down an alleyway too narrow for their cruisers to follow.

Percy watched himself get distracted by the showgirls after defacing Zeus' statue, telling his husband that he wanted to try on one of those outfits someday, which led Jason to ask the girl how much money it would take to get her clothes, resulting in him getting slapped across the face for his poor choice of words.

Once the misunderstanding had been cleared up, she'd happily let Percy trade her outfit for the expensive wedding dress he'd been toting around.

They'd been on their way back to the hotel when Percy heard a distant cry for help. He stopped immediately, but Jason said he hadn't heard anything. That's when he realized the sound was coming from inside a nearby restaurant.

To say the chefs were surprised to see two men, one in a showgirl getup and one carrying a pineapple like it was a football, go sprinting through their Michelin star kitchen to steal a lobster off the chopping block, was an understatement.

Guido had been ecstatic to meet him, dramatically vowing to stay by his side forever.

He quickly rescinded that pledge when Percy plopped him into their hotel bathroom's sink.

This is an atrocity. He'd stated haughtily.

Percy barely heard him, already too caught up in pushing Jason onto the bed, his drunken state making the task of undoing the button on his pants much more difficult than it needed to be, but once he'd accomplished it he wasted no time in getting his mouth on him. Jason was hard and incredibly hot against his tongue. Percy was new to this, but, judging by the pleased little sighs and grunts that fell from Jason's lips, he wasn't doing too bad.

The lights in their room flickered once, but he paid it no mind. Jason's fingers were twisting in his hair, making his eyelids flutter closed, and his own erection was trapped against his stomach in the tight green fabric of the showgirl outfit. Nothing could pull his focus away from this moment, especially as the salty tang of Jason's precum spread across his tongue, announcing his impending orgasm. He had time to pull away, but he didn't want to, fuck he-

The lights flickered erratically, then went out completely.

It shocked him out of his lust driven state enough to sit up, pulling off of Jason to look around in confusion. There was barely enough light coming in through the window for him to see Jason propping himself up on the bed, his eyes wide.

"Wha-" Percy started to ask, but Jason cut him off.

" *I'm sorry!* " He blurted, his hand coming up to cover his mouth, his face twisting in embarrassment. "I didn't mean to, I swear! I-It just felt really good!" Jason flushed in mortification, hiding his face behind both hands now as he flopped backwards on the bed.

It took a second for Percy's brain to catch up with the situation, but when it did, he burst out laughing. He laughed so hard he lost his

breath and had to double over, bracing himself against Jason's legs as he gasped for air.

"Stop laughing," Jason groaned, but there was a lighter tilt to voice that betrayed the amusement he also found in this. "I haven't lost control like that in *years,* it's embarrassing." The comforting weight of Jason's hand smoothed over his back as he fought for air.

It took him a moment, but he was finally able to wipe the tears away and sit back up, which was a mistake, because the second they looked at each other they both started laughing again.

It wasn't even that funny.

Okay, it was a *little* funny. Jason blowing the electrical circuits in the hotel room because he got too caught up in getting a blow job? Hilarious. How the hell were they going to expla-

There was a loud pop from the bathroom, followed closely by the sound of rushing water.

They both stopped laughing immediately. Percy could instantly feel the damage he'd done to the water pipes in the shower. Shit.

It'd taken them all of three minutes to appear presentable before hotel security began knocking on their door. Thankfully Percy'd had the good sense to change into regular clothes and out of the showgirl outfit.

Instead of the scolding they'd been expecting, they got an apology.

“I am *so* sorry!” The harried looking woman who greeted them at the door said. “There seems to have been an accident with the power system and this whole wing of the fifth floor has lost power, along with some of the plumbing malfunctioning. We apologize profusely, but you will have to be assigned another room for the remainder of your stay while repairs are sorted. If you’d please report to the front desk, we will get you another room at no cost to you. Again, we are *so* sorry this happened, I don’t-”

“It’s okay, really,” Jason said with a pained smile, holding up a hand to stop the poor woman’s babbling. “No trouble at all, we understand.” After all, it *was* their dumb shenanigans that were causing this woman so much stress.

To their surprise, they ran into Coach Hedge down in the lobby. His room had also lost power, but unfortunately he knew exactly who was to blame. Percy wasn’t sure how, but they managed to come up with a lame story about someone stubbing a toe and the other laughing so hard they lost control of their powers. It was half right at least.

It earned them a good fifteen minute lecture on how dangerous drunken demi-gods were, which spiraled into a rant about how worried he’d been they’d ran off after the wedding with a biker gang.

Unfortunately the woman who’d talked to them earlier overheard the part about the wedding, and she was brought nearly to tears, worried she’d ruined their wedding night with all the trouble at the hotel. Percy felt so bad for her, but she absolutely would not listen to the placations he tried to calm her with.

She ended up ordering the receptionist, Tahir, to upgrade them to the honeymoon suite on the top floor immediately.

Now he felt even worse. This was their fault and they were getting rewarded for it?

Jason ended up convincing him to leave the poor woman to her work and stop trying to calm her down because whenever she saw them she started saying sorry again and wouldn't stop until Tahir found something to distract her with.

Apparently she was a new manager and this was her first week. Percy made a mental note to send her a fruit basket or something later on.

For now though, it was ridiculously late and he wanted nothing more than to get Jason behind a closed door.

***

On the way to their new room, they stopped by the old one to grab their suitcases and a few other things. Tahir had assured them that the rest would be safe there until morning.

Jason watched Percy dance drunkenly down the long hallway heading towards the elevator, a stupid, goofy grin on his face. He let Percy pull him into the elevator by his collar and shove him up against the wall, hungrily kissing him back as the doors dinged shut. Thankfully the ride was over quickly, otherwise he wasn't sure they'd make it to their new room. As it was, they only broke apart when an elderly couple got in and started shooting them scandalized looks. Percy winked at the old lady, who turned red and ushered her husband off on the next floor.

By the time they reached the top floor, Jason was itching to get Percy undressed. They giggled and pushed at each other all the way down the hall, pausing every now and then to steal a kiss or spin the other

around in an impromptu dance move.

There weren't many people about, but they did run into two men who looked eerily familiar to Jason, but he couldn't quite put his finger on who they were. The taller of the two men stared at Jason like he knew him, pausing briefly to grip his shoulder in a firm hand, his unnaturally blue eyes burning into his very being.

Then he was gone, vanishing into seemingly thin air, and Jason's brain was instantly clear. What the fuck? That guy just touched him and…made him sober? That didn't make any-

A sense of realization hit him like a brick, and he remembered where he'd seen that man before.

That was the disguise his father had used when he'd cornered Jason in the wedding chapel and tried to convince him not to marry Percy.

He whipped around, but the two men had truly disappeared. But if that had been Jupiter then the other must have been…

Percy stood staring off down the hallway with him, also searching for his dad, the drunken haze gone from his eyes.

They slowly turned to look at each other. A question started to form on Jason's lips, but it died when Percy's eyebrows relaxed and his jaw set in determination before surging forward to kiss him.

"Come on," he murmured against Percy's lips, delighting at the feeling of them pulling up into a smile against his. "Our room's right down here."

***

Percy stopped outside their new room door, Jason breathing hard behind him, hands wandering and touching where they pleased. The taste of him lingered on his tongue.

“We do this and there’s no going back, Percy.” Jason panted into his shoulder.

He leaned his head back and let Jason kiss up his neck and bury his face there. “Mmmm, good, I don’t want to lose you.”

“We’ll be married forever, you’ll be *stuck* with me forever.” Jason nipped at his skin and Percy turned in his arms, capturing his lips in a slow kiss.

He pulled back to look at him, Jason’s face cradled in his hands. “I want that. Do you? Want to be with me forever, too?”

Jason kissed him again and reached behind him to swipe their key card in the lock.

Chapter End Notes

> Dear old dads making sure their stubborn kids don't make big life decisions under the influence of godly alcohol. (Although Zeus only did it in hopes it would make Jason realize he didn't want to go through with it. Jokes on him, it just made him want it more.)

Homecoming

Chapter Notes

> Life is hard and hyperfixations + writers block has made me absent for half a year and I am so sorry. Such is the cursed life of a fanfiction writer.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-Present Time-

Percy's POV

From the security camera feed in the captain's room, Percy could see Camp Half-Blood come into view. He nudged Jason with his elbow, who looked up from their wedding album.

They'd been going through it again, this time being able to recall everything they'd done that night. The anxiety driven pit in his stomach being gone made it much more enjoyable to reminisce over all the photos Hera had created for them. The album had fifteen pages in total, the last three being entirely dedicated to random candids that were taken from various points in the night.

One of Percy's favorites was on the last page.

He wasn't sure why she'd chosen to make a photo of this moment from their memories, but he was glad she did, because it was so utterly ridiculous that it was hard to comprehend.

Percy, dressed like a showgirl, held Guido in both hands out in front of him like a cross aimed at two restaurant chefs who had backed themselves up into a corner. They were holding onto each other in

confusion as Percy brandished his lobster at them while Jason darted across the background holding the fake pineapple like a football. At the very end of the photo loop, you could just make out the flash of police lights glinting off the pans in the kitchen.

He had half a mind to frame it and hang it on his wall.

“We’re here,” Jason murmured, closing the album and setting it to the side. “Ready?”

“As I’ll ever be,” Percy answered, leaning back into the warm embrace Jason was wrapping him in. “Let’s start the landing gear. I guarantee Leo’s going to be right outside the blast doors the second we touch down.”

To his surprise, Leo was nowhere to be seen once the doors retreated into the ceiling.

They cautiously poked their heads out of the command center and looked around, but the halls were empty and silent. Was this some sort of trick? He was sure they were about to get the talking-to of their lifetimes. Where was everyone?

Hedge clopped his way around the corner, gym back strung over his shoulder. He paused when he saw them and gave them a quizzical eyebrow. “What are you waiting for? We’re home.”

“Where is everyone?” Jason asked, eyes still darting around as if Leo was suddenly about to pop up out of the floor.

Hedge shrugged. “Nico and Will shadow traveled down to the ground

right as we landed. I don't know where the others are, to tell ya the truth, but I'd wager they're probably laying low until things clear out." He adjusted the strap of his gym bag. "Things meaning you two, by the way," he added. "So get your asses out there and deal with your own problems so the rest of us can stop doin' it."

With that, he was gone. Harsh words, but it was true. They had caused the others on this trip so much trouble over the last couple of days. Once Leo had a few days to calm down, Percy would seek him out and offer to help with the clean up.

"Well," Jason sighed, reaching over to take Percy's hand, "You ready?"

"As I'll ever be," he said, returning the reassuring squeeze Jason gave his hand.

***

Annabeth and Piper weren't waiting for them outside the ship like they'd feared.

"Not sure if this is a good thing, or a bad thing," Percy muttered as he looked around. "Where do you think they are?"

"Our cabins?" Jason suggested. "Probably yours. Piper hates the statue of my dad."

"I do too," Percy commented, adjusting his grip on Guido, who was cradled in his other arm.

“Join the club.”

They started off towards the cabins, getting a few odd looks from campers directed at the lobster Percy was carrying, but most ignored them, used to Percy’s weirdness after years of living around him.

Drew Tanaka gave them a double take as they passed her while she was showing some younger camper’s how to fasten their armor, her brows scrunched together in mild confusion. She stared until one of the kids she was helping got her attention with a question, and she went back to her task with a small shake of her head and a knowing smile on her face.

They paused outside Percy’s cabin, and he shuffled his feet, feeling awkward. “Should we…knock?” he asked.

“It’s your cabin,” Jason huffed with a laugh and took a step forward, turning the handle and pushing the door open.

It was empty, filled with nothing but the sound of his bubbling fountain.

Guido’s legs twitched and his antenna waved in excitement as he smelt the salt water.

Lord, is this your home? He asked curiously.

Yeah. Well, kinda. Sometimes. It’s complicated. Percy told him, walking into his dark cabin to set Guido down on the edge of the fountain. *You*

can hang out in the water until…uh, well until you decide where you want to go.

Guido investigated the large fountain with his feelers, his thoughts quiet as he scuttled around the seastone rim, his little feet *tictictak* -ing against it rhythmically.

Me decide? He hesitantly asked eventually. *I can just…leave?*

Percy frowned. *Of course you can. The ocean isn't too far away, I can take you there later, if you want.*

Guido's eyestalks gleamed in the light of the lamp Jason had clicked on by Percy's bed. *I've never been there. The ocean. I…wouldn't know what to do.*

Sadness bloomed in his chest for this small crustacean. *Guido, were you born in that restaurant?* Percy asked gently.

I don't know. I don't think so, but it's hard for me to tell the inside of one building from another. There aren't any landmarks in the waters they kept us in, it all looked the same in the tanks. Just sand. And other lobsters. Guido gave the mental equivalent of a shrug, as if it wasn't a big deal.

You can stay here for a while, if you want. Percy offered gently, picking up the little bag of algae wafers he feeds to the minnows in the lake every now and then. He placed a couple next to Guido, who immediately started to inspect the little green circles with his forelegs. Percy sensed his excitement as Guido realized it was food.

The lobster knocked the wafers into the water and then slid in after

them, arranging the wafers into a neat pile once they'd sunk to the bottom.

I shall stay for the moment, then, Guido answered as he started systematically breaking apart the first wafer to eat. *Thank you,* he added softly before turning his attention to his task.

Percy observed him for a bit longer, some part of him hoping Guido never left, but he chided himself for the thought. Guido deserved to be free if that was his wish. If he chose to leave, he could go.

He sighed and turned to place the bag of fish food on his dresser. Jason was sitting on the edge of his bed in contented silence, watching Percy.

"Sorry," he said. Sometimes it was easy to forget other people couldn't understand the conversations he had with marine life forms and to them it just seemed like Percy was ignoring them. "Guido was just-"

"You don't have to apologize," Jason said with a smile, catching one of Percy's hands and drawing him closer. "I figured you were talking to him. I didn't want to interrupt, it looked important."

Percy let himself be pulled, hiding his own small smile in the top of Jason's hair as he wrapped his arms around him in a hug while he was still sitting on his bed. Jason buried his face into Percy's chest and hugged him back.

"It feels good to be home," Jason muttered after a comfortable stretch of silence.

It was still a bit strange to him, being able to want this closeness with Jason without feeling guilty or confused, and he suspected it would for a bit until he got used to it.

Percy held him a bit longer, humming his agreement, before eventually releasing him.

“I-”

He was interrupted by a knock on the door and something told him it was exactly who he was expecting.

***

Piper and Jason didn’t stay long.

“Can we talk?” Piper asked Jason from her place behind Annabeth when Percy opened the door. Her arms were wrapped around her, like she was seeking comfort from herself. “Outside,” she elaborated after a second, nodding to the nearby woods.

Jason briefly placed a hand on Percy’s lower back as he slipped past him to follow her, the warmth a momentary relief to the nerves jittering around inside him, but then it was gone and so was he.

Annabeth followed him inside and closed the door behind them after Piper and Jason disappeared into the trees.

Feeling out of place in his own cabin, Percy awkwardly sat on the

edge of his bed where Jason had just vacated, and bit the inside of his lip as Annabeth paced around the room.

She didn't look mad, which was a good start, but the tension around them was palpable. She walked back and forth across the small space a few times, chewing on her thumbnail absently as she stared at her feet. She was thinking, and he knew her well enough to not interrupt her, but he also felt like he should definitely be the one that starts this conversation.

"I'm…" he started, and then promptly realized he didn't know what to say. Annabeth stopped pacing, her back to him as she stared at their reflections in the mirror above his dresser. He tried again. "I feel like I should say 'I'm sorry', but that doesn't seem like the right thing…" he said, trying and failing to meet her eyes in the mirror.

Annabeth studied him for a long moment.

"Are you happy?" she asked quietly, and Percy looked up in surprise to find her turned around, facing him. Her stormy gray eyes pinned him to his seat.

"With-"

"With him, yes," she clarified. Her voice gave away no hint of what her emotions were in the moment.

"I-yeah." he said. "Yes."

"Do you love him?" she asked, and this time he could hear just the faintest hint of sadness in her tone.

“Annabeth-”

“ *Do you love him?* ” she asked again. There was something like desperation in her eyes, as if the answer to this question was eating her up inside and she’d do anything to get it.

“I do,” he admitted, unable to help the pang of loss he knew signified the last threads of the relationship between him and Annabeth falling away. “I have for a while,” he added. If he was being truthful, he might as well lay it all out there. “I just didn’t know it.”

Annabeth closed her eyes slowly and nodded, breathing steadily as she absorbed this information. “And…were you happy with me, Percy?”

The question surprised him and he stood up quickly, his first instinct being to pull her into a hug, but halfway there he realized that might not be what she wanted in this moment, so he froze with his arms lifted slightly.

“Yes, of course I was-am, I-” he stumbled over his words, knowing they were true, but knowing she might not believe him. “I love you, Annabeth.”

She sighed lightly, and some of the tension eased from her shoulders as her eyes opened. Annabeth walked forward and threw her arms around him. “I know,” she whispered, squeezing him. “I just wanted to hear it.”

“I’ll always love you,” he said into the top of her hair, his arms hugging her close.

“But?” she prompted, her laugh forced and wet-sounding. Her face was hidden against his shirt, but he could feel the tears soaking into the fabric.

“Annabeth…”

She sniffled and pulled back, wiping at her eyes with the back of her hand. “I told you the day you left that I thought Piper was right. I didn’t want to believe it, but I know you, Percy. I know how you love and I know what it looks like when you’re *in* love. I’m not young and naive. There are different kinds of love.” She smiled up at him. “And it’s okay that love can change, sometimes.”

She was being so strong. He could tell her heart was breaking, even as she told him it was okay that he loved someone other than her. Percy didn’t deserve her, he really didn’t.

“I’m sorry that it happened this way,” he said quietly. And it was true. If he’d seen how much he’d been gravitating towards Jason over the years then maybe he could’ve talked to her sooner, so all this didn’t crash together in the span of a weekend.

Annabeth huffed a bit of a laugh. “Love is messy and people get hurt. I don’t think that’s ever going to change. But that doesn’t mean it isn’t worth it. I love you, Percy, and I always will. I’ve loved you for so long, and you loved me too. And I think…” she paused to wipe aways some tears that escaped down her cheeks. “I think that maybe in the end that’s all that matters.”

“This isn’t the end,” he said softly, catching her hand in one of his.

But it was.

"It is for us," she pressed gently. Annabeth took a very deep breath and let it out slowly. "This isn't entirely your fault, Percy, I want you to know that. I could see that we were changing, but I looked the other way because I thought that if I didn't acknowledge it then it wouldn't be true. If I pretended we were okay then things would be alright. I was…I was jealous of him, you know?" She looked to the side, embarrassed from her admission. "He made you smile so much and I saw how excited you'd get when he was around, but it was easier to tell myself it wasn't real." She slipped her hand out of his and fiddled with a lock of hair that had fallen over her shoulder. "And then I found the letter from the university," she admitted sheepishly.

Percy felt guilt bloom in his stomach. "I should have told you."

"I thought you would," she said, still nervously playing with her hair. "But then weeks went by and you never brought it up, and whenever I talked about us moving back here you acted like it was still something you were going to do, even though you'd renewed your dorm room and re-enrolled for next year's classes."

"I was scared you'd be mad," he whispered. "You put so much into planning the future that I felt like I was ruining it by wanting to stay behind."

"Our dream was to-"

" *Your* dream," he said quietly. Her hand fell away from her hair to hang at her side. "It's okay," he added quickly, trying to smooth over his harsh injection. "I didn't tell you I-"

"I didn't ask," she cut him off, pressing a hand to her lips. "I just

assumed you'd go with me, I never…I never thought about what *you* wanted," she murmured.

He didn't say anything, unable to refute her words, so he stood there silently before her.

"I'm so sorry, Percy," she said eventually, embarrassment and shame heavy on her voice. "You-"

"There's…a lot of things we could've done differently," he hedged. "Both of us."

"I can't believe I-"

"Annabeth, *stop,* " he commanded gently. "Don't beat yourself up over this, okay?" Percy forced a laugh out. "I'm the one that went off to Vegas and married someone else, remember?"

She sniffed, giving a small chuckle. "I can't believe I wasn't there for my boyfriend's wedding," she joked.

Percy did have to laugh at that, a genuinely amused puff of air escaping him. "Yeah, you missed a pretty wild night. Jason got tased by the cops. I stole a lobster, drew a dick on Zeus' face, and won a couple grand at a casino playing poker-not necessarily in that order, of course. Pretty sure Grover, Leo, and Frank committed grand theft auto. Nico and Will did a little bit of vandalism and played golf with Coach Hedge. Oh, and I think I joined a gang. No wait, I'm sure I joined a gang, actually."

She raised an eyebrow at him. "How much of that is an

exaggeration?"

He raised his hands. "All honest, I swear. Although I get why it's hard to believe. I didn't think Nico would be caught dead playing golf either, but here we are." He lowered his hands, letting the joke go. "But in all seriousness, it is true. I don't think I'm ever drinking alcohol again."

Her forehead wrinkled with worry. "Are you okay? You always said you hated alcohol because of your old step-dad, and I got really worried when you called me drunk."

He rubbed the back of his neck absently. "I'm okay," he reassured her. "It definitely brought up some unpleasant memories, but…I was pretty preoccupied so I didn't have a lot of time to dwell on it. I'm definitely not doing it again, though. Once was enough."

"Alright," she said gently. "If you need to talk or anything…"

"Thanks," he nodded with a grateful smile.

She looked at him with that some concerned expression for another moment longer before finally nodding too. "Listen, there's still a *lot* we need to talk about, but I think for now I want to take a breather and you probably want to relax and unpack. Piper is…she's gonna need me soon and I should go find her. She's taking this pretty hard. Percy," Annabeth pulled him in for a brief but tight hug and then released it, holding him at arm's length. "I want you to know that I *am* happy for you, I'm just going to need some time for everything to sort itself out in my brain. Please don't think I'm avoiding you, but I need to process this and I don't think I can do it here."

"I understand," he said, already feeling guilty. By 'here' she meant

‘around him’.

Annabeth smiled at him and let her arms drop back to her sides. “Don’t sound so down. I’ll be around. Maybe next time, you can show me what that’s all about,” she added, pointing with her chin towards his nightstand where his wedding album sat innocently, the front cover laying open. The picture on the page looped around again, showing him and Jason kissing over Axel’s head.

Percy reached over and flipped it closed. “Sorry,” he said, wincing. “It’s a wedding album from Hera. I-there’s a lot of…um, you can look at it if you want, but-”

Annabeth cut him off. “I don’t think I’m quite ready for that yet…” she said, shaking her head. “But like I said: next time, maybe.”

“Okay.”

She started to make her way towards his door.

“Annabeth.” She paused and turned her head slightly, waiting for him to speak. “Just, thank you. For…everything. For us.”

Her cheek pulled up into a smile. “I love you too, Percy.” And then she was opening the door and stepping outside into the sun.

He thought he’d feel a void in the place she’d left within him, but as he stood there watching her ponytail sway as she walked, he realized that she’d never really left. That place inside him that loved her was still there, it had just changed. Reshaped itself into something different and he was pleased by that. In time, they would be okay.

They'd always love each other, just not in the way they used to. It was new and unfamiliar, which was scary, but he knew how to deal with scary. Annabeth would always be a part of him, and he'd always be a part of her. They'd been through too much together to ever be anything less.

She was right, love was messy. He'd never fully understand all of its nuances and facets, but he thought maybe that was the point.

Annabeth was hurt, that much was clear. Her heart was broken and only time could heal it, but that didn't mean the love they shared had gone away.

Just like the love he had for Jason hadn't suddenly sprang into existence, but instead had grown and spread without him realizing it.

It was frustrating to him that he couldn't fix all of this by himself, all at once, but again that was the point, wasn't it?

You can't solve love. Surely someone would have succeeded by now, if that was the case. Maybe the big secret is that there *was* no secret. You just have to do what feels right, even if it scares you.

Percy's attention locked onto a figure making its way out of the treeline.

Jason didn't scare him.

He raised his hand in greeting as Jason jogged up to his cabin, a lopsided grin forming on his lips as he saw Percy waiting for him.

His heart skipped a beat, and really, how had Percy been so blind all this time?

No, Jason didn't scare him. But he did feel right.

He felt like home.

-The End-

Epilogue Still To Come

Leo and Frank Epilogue Still To Come

Chapter End Notes

To everyone who's been here since the beginning, thank you so much for sticking around. And to everyone who's joined along the way or has just picked this up, thank you for reading. Seriously. I know my update schedule has been very infrequent, but it means the world to me that you're here. I know a few of you are upset, but sometimes life just comes first, and that's something I can't change. I hope you all enjoyed this goofy fic I thought up over two years ago while listening to that Katy Perry song while working and trying to just get through the day. It was originally supposed to be such a short and silly fic, but ended up becoming my longest, highest stat fic I ever published. I've grown so much as a writer since the first chapter of this fic and I apologize profusely for the cringey earlier chapters because trust me, I've re-read them and even I can tell they were yikes. But I had loads of fun writing this fic and I'm very satisfied with it's ending.

I still have the epilogue planned and have decided to give Frank and Leo an epilogue of their own, so keep your eyes out!

Until next time,

Thanks for reading <3

JasonxPercy Epilogue

Chapter Notes

> It's been a while! Too long imo, but hey that's life I guess. Have some silly boys being happy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jason

The portal spat them out and the first thing Jason felt was the sweltering heat of the midday sun. The second thing he felt was the scorching, rocky dirt as he ungracefully tumbled to the ground.

Thankfully, he had enough sense to roll out of the way seconds before the others fell after him.

He stood up and brushed the dust off his pants, the hot air filling his lungs made him immediately wish for a glass of water. He looked around as the other climbed to their feet. Nothing but desert all around them, as far as the eye could see. Scarce little shrubs and spiky cacti were scattered about here and there, and on the horizon a large butte jutted up from the ground in a multitude of reds, oranges, and tans.

“Of all the places…,” Percy muttered darkly, picking pebbles out of a scrape on his arm. “Just once, couldn’t we get sent somewhere *nice?”*

“At least we’re not stuck back in that cave,” Piper reasoned, giving Annabeth a hand up.

“I’d prefer that, trust me,” Percy said. “Historically, nothing good has ever happened to me in the desert.”

“The cave was *collapsing* ,” Annabeth reminded him.

“And yet,” Percy said, “still rather be there.”

“Does anyone know where we actually *are?* ” Jason asked. The heat was making him sleepy. He wanted to curl up on a rock in the shade like a lizard and take a nice nap.

That wasn’t a good thing. Feeling sluggish and tired would get him killed if they were attacked out here.

Annabeth looked around, her gray eyes taking stock of the landscape. “Arizona?” she guessed eventually.

“Feels like it,” Piper said, pulling her hair up off her neck and tying it back.

Percy finished brushing the pebbles out his scrape and sighed. “Does that thing still work?” He asked, nodding to the glow stick in Annabeth’s hand.

She shook her head and slipped it into her back pocket. “One use only, I’m afraid.” As if to punctuate her announcement, the portal behind them shut with a loud *snick!* The cool cave air that had been leaking out of it disappeared instantly. “Hermes said it was for emergencies. I figured almost being buried alive inside a *striges* cave was sort of an emergency.”

“Should we risk a phone call to camp?” Jason suggested.

Annabeth pulled the emergency cell phone out of her back pocket and sighed, seeing its cracked screen and dark display.

"It's not like it would have helped, anyways," Percy said. "Leo says I'm still banned from the *Argo II,* and even if I wasn't, I think he's still out with Frank on that mission."

"Any suggestions on which way to walk?" Annabeth asked, looking around them.

Piper shrugged, and Percy just looked miserable.

Jason tried to shake off the sleepy feeling that was trying to overcome him and pointed in a random direction where it looked like there was a dark smudge that might be a building on the horizon. "That way."

They walked for what seemed like hours, the sun beating down on them from above. Jason could feel his skin starting to burn and wished he'd had the foresight to bring a hat. He hated how easily he sunburned.

Eventually, the smudge started to take shape, forming into a little gas station on the side of a barely-there dirt road. It almost looked abandoned, but he could see a silhouette of a cashier behind one of the dirty windows.

Blissful, cold air hit them as they entered the little gas station store and immediately chased away the sleepy miasma, perking up his senses.

The cashier raised a curious eyebrow at them, his gaze flicking outside, probably looking for a car they didn't have.

Annabeth walked up to the counter with four water bottles in tow and the man behind the counter rang them up without question, although his eyebrow remained raised.

"Um, where are we?" Jason asked the guy awkwardly. "We kind of got lost," he added quickly, clearing his throat. "Our car broke down a few miles back."

"Couple miles outside White Hills. Not much else. You're about an hour from Vegas if you follow the 93 to I-11 across Hoover Dam. In a car of course." The cashier gave them a sympathetic look and said, "There's a payphone 'round back you can use. Triple A doesn't have any outposts or contractors near here, but there is a tow company about 40 miles south that services this area."

Percy perked up at the mention of Vegas and Jason tried not to have flashbacks.

"I know someone in Vegas who can help," Percy said, holding out his hand to Annabeth who dropped some quarters into his palm.

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Axel and a few of his buddies cruised into the gas station an hour and a half later, a massive dust cloud trailing behind them. The huge biker was grinning ear to ear when he wrapped them both up in a hug and lifted them a few inches off the ground.

“I was wondering when I’d hear from you two again!” He shouted happily, setting them back down. “It’s been a few months, how’ve ya been? Gotta catch me up on all the trouble you’ve been in since then!” Axel beamed at them, appearing genuinely happy to see them. “Oh,” he said, looking over at Annabeth and Piper. “How rude of me, I’m Axel,” he introduced himself, holding out a massive hand for them to shake. “So tell me: what’s got you stranded in the middle of Nowhere, USA?”

“It’s a work thing,” Percy said vaguely, waving a hand about. “You know how it is.”

Axel, true to his character, asked no more questions and just nodded sagely. “Happens to the best of us,” he agreed, although Jason had no idea what the hell he was agreeing with. “Not a problem, I’m here to help. And I brought gifts!”

“You shouldn’t have,” Percy said, a tinge of concern in his voice, like he was worried what exactly the ‘gifts’ would be.

“Nonsense,” Axel said, waving his hand at someone in his gang. Two bikers idled forwards and then kicked out the kickstands before hopping off of the bikes. “These are for you. Had them made a few weeks back and was hoping you’d reach out soon.”

Jason, mouth agape, stared at the shiny metal contraptions. “I-we can’t accept these,” he started to say, but Percy spoke over him.

“They’re amazing!” he shouted, clapping Axel on the back as high as he could. “Thanks!”

“ *Percy,* ” Jason chastised.

“These are so *cool!* ” Piper said, circling the motorcycles.

“I owe you little dudes a lot,” Axel explained, ruffling Jason’s hair. “You two helped me more than you could ever realize.” He pulled his cell phone out from his pocket and unlocked the screen that was still the picture of all three of them. His homescreen was a picture of two unfamiliar women, one of whom looked very similar to Axel himself. “This is my daughter and her wife,” he said. “She came over a few days after your wedding and saw my lockscreen. We got to talking, and it turns out…she was scared to tell me she’d gotten married because she was worried what I would think about her spouse being another woman.” He shook his head sadly. “All this time she thought I’d hate her for it, but I couldn’t be happier that she’s found someone she loves. Not to lie, I was pretty mad I wasn’t there when she got married, but they just went down to the courthouse, no ceremony or anything. I told her she should have one anyways, it’s not too late. She’s got a date set next spring for a vow renewal and I’ll finally get to walk my daughter down the aisle. I could’ve missed out on her life if she hadn’t seen that picture of us.” He slipped his phone back into his pocket. “Take the bikes,” he said firmly.

Jason still thought they were a bit much, but Axel was insistent and Percy looked ecstatic, so he couldn’t really argue.

“Thank you,” was all he could say.

Now that they had mobility, it was only a question of where to go. Camp Jupiter was certainly closer, but would take them further away from Camp Half-Blood, which was their destination. Annabeth was strongly for getting plane tickets at the nearest airport since she had Chiron’s emergency credit card for situations exactly like this, but the only problem with that was Percy couldn’t fly that high, and what would they do with the new motorcycles they’d just acquired.

“Okay, Piper and I can take a plane, you and Jason can drive home,” Annabeth eventually said, eyeing the bikes. “I’m not too keen on going cross country on those. You guys will just have to drop us off at the nearest airport.”

“Are you sure,” Percy asked. “It’s gonna be fun. You’re gonna miss out.”

“Percy, it’s nearly a 40 hour trip. I’d much rather take a red eye flight and get there the next day.”

Jason was fine going either way. Flying was his home territory, but Percy couldn’t risk going as high as airplanes flew because they never knew when Zeus or Jupiter might take offense to it and smite an entire airplane out of the sky on a whim. He’d rather be with Percy, anyways, whichever route they took, he thought, taking a glance over at his husband who was nearly vibrating with excitement next to his brand new motorcycle.

“You can catch a ride back to Vegas with the boys,” Axel offered. “Take a flight from there to wherever you need to go. They gotta head back home anyways.”

“Are you not going back to Vegas with them?” Jason asked curiously.

Axel snorted and shook his head. “And let you two have all the fun on the road trip by yourselves? Been a long time since I went cross country on my ride. Think it’ll be nice to have a little trip with some friends.”

“You really don’t have to go with us,” Jason said, “It’s almost three days on the road, we can’t ask that of you. You have a family back home. We’re going all the way to New York.”

“The wife won’t mind,” he assured him. “She’s been telling me I need to take a vacation anyways. I’ll call her up and let her know.”

Percy and Jason shared a brief look and shrugged. Axel wasn’t exactly a *stranger* and he was pretty cool to hang out with. Plus Jason had no clue which way went to New York and he’d prefer not to get lost along the way.

One of the bikers in the group offered to go with them as well, so Axel didn’t have to ride home alone. Jason found out he went by Greenbean, but had no clue as to why.

“Thank’s, GB,” Axel said.

While Axel was on the phone with his wife, Jason and Percy stepped aside with Annabeth and Piper.

“Are you okay going with those guys?” Jason asked the girls.

“Yeah, they seem like alright people,” Piper said. “It’s only an hour away. We’ll be fine.”

“Is this the guy you two met on the Vegas trip?” Annabeth asked. “The one who’s cell phone you borrowed to call us?”

“Yeah,” Percy said sheepishly. “He grows on you, trust me.”

“Just be safe, okay?” Annabeth said. “Three days…A lot of monsters can find you in three days, and this guy’s only human. I don’t want him getting hurt.”

“We’ll keep an eye out, don’t worry,” Jason assured her.

It wasn’t long before they were saying their goodbyes and going separate ways. They watched the girls and Axel’s gang disappear into the distance, another dust cloud in their wake.

Axel instructed them to check the saddlebags on their new bikes and they discovered a black helmet and a leather jacket for each of them.

“It’s sweltering,” Jason said, “so I think I’ll wait to put this on.”

“Yer gonna want it sooner than later,” Greenbean said, nodding. “Wind chill gets you good when yer going fast. Plus it’s a barrier between your skin and the pavement if you crash.”

Jason decided to listen to him, slipping his arms through the sleeve. It was a good fit. He looked over at Percy to find out that he looked born to wear a leather jacket, because of course he had to look amazing in it.

They listened intently as Axel and Greenbean went over how to operate the motorcycles since neither him nor Percy had ever piloted one before.

“Is it gonna be a problem that we don’t have motorcycle licenses?” Jason wondered.

“Not if we don’t get caught,” Percy said winking at him. Jason rolled his eyes but he supposed it was true.

They were on the road within the hour, their destination seemingly an impossible distance away from them. They cruised through desert wastelands for what seemed like forever, nothing on the horizon but more sand and shrubbery. Greenbean was right, the jacket was nice now that they were on the road.

They drove for hours, the sun high in the sky. By the time it started to dip behind them and darken the environment, Jason was ready to turn in for the day. Thankfully they passed a Motel 6 not soon after that and pulled in to rent two rooms for the night. When Jason got off his bike he was stiff and his arms still felt like they were vibrating from the engine.

Percy was buzzing, his excitement from earlier still hanging around him like an intoxicating atmosphere. It took Jason actually dragging him into their room for him to finally start getting ready for bed. They both took quick showers and afterwards it was like the day's activities started to catch up to Percy because he was asleep before Jason was able to cover him up with the blanket. Jason crawled in bed next to him and Percy immediately curled up into his side, an arm thrown over his chest. Jason made sure to kiss his forehead before drifting off to sleep himself.

In the morning they had an early breakfast at the motel and then got back on the road. Eventually the desert turned into Heartland, no mountains anywhere to be seen. They drove diagonally across Oklahoma, then Missouri, stopping occasionally for food, gas, and to sleep at night. Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio were miles and miles of farmland and cornfields.

They woke up just inside of Pennsylvania on the third morning. This was the last state they had to cross before finally reaching New York. They’d had a few run-ins with monsters, usually at night, but it was

easy to take care of them quickly and go back to sleep soon after. Jason was pretty sure they moved too much during the day for them to pinpoint where they were, but at night when they rested it was easier to locate them.

Jason was almost convinced his arms vibrating was the new normal for them.

When the skyscrapers of New York finally appeared on the horizon it was early afternoon.

They pulled into Percy's mom's apartment around dinner time, and Axel and Greenbean came upstairs with them to say goodbye. Percy's mom and step-dad weren't home, and had left a note saying they'd gone to Jersey for a writer's meeting and would be gone for a few days.

Percy invited the bikers to stay for dinner and ordered a pizza. While they were sitting around the living room eating, Axel asked how Percy's mom handled the news of their nuptials when they got back from Vegas a few months ago.

Jason winced internally, recalling Sally's devastated face when they'd told her.

"She…was really sad," Percy said eventually. "She cried a lot."

"Then got really mad," Jason added helpfully. "I don't think I've ever seen her that angry before."

Axel laughed and nodded, "Sounds about like I'd expect. I was the same when I found out my daughter got married and I'd missed it. Was she happy you were happy after she got over being mad?"

Percy nodded. “Yeah. I still felt bad, though. I told her we could have a ceremony up here so she could be a part of it. It kind of cheered her up a bit. It’s still in the early stages of planning, but you should come once we set a date. I’ll give you a call when we get it figured out, yeah?”

Axel agreed heartily and helped himself to another piece of pizza.

Percy offered to let Axel and Greenbean stay here for the night before they hit the road again tomorrow, but they politely declined.

“We’ll get a room at a motel and head out early tomorrow,” Axel said. They stayed a while, chatting and just hanging out before they eventually left with heartfelt goodbyes and promises to keep in touch every now and again.

Jason took a shower while Percy cleaned up the living room, and then it was Percy’s turn in the shower. Jason was sitting on the couch idly watching TV after calling Camp to let Annabeth and Piper know they’d made it home safe and would be staying at Sally’s tonight.

Percy called for him shortly after he heard the shower shut off.

“Jason, can you come here for a second?”

Jason got up and followed his voice to his room where he found him standing with a towel around his waist, and Jason’s leather jacket in his hands.

“Here, put this on.”

“Why?” he laughed, but took it from Percy anyway and slipped it over his t-shirt.

As soon as it settled onto his shoulders, Percy grabbed the front of it and pushed him backwards until his back closed the door behind them, and kissed him deeply.

“Because I want to fuck you in it,” Percy growled against his lips, his knee sliding inbetween Jason’s thighs to rub against his cock. “You’ve been driving me crazy ever since you put it on.”

Jason exhaled through his nose in amusement, because he’d thought the same thing about Percy in his jacket.

He grabbed Percy’s hips, idly surprised the towel had managed to stay on so long, and rubbed himself against Percy’s thigh again, his dick starting to fill out. Percy kissed him again, his tongue flicking against Jason’s lips, asking for entry. He granted it, tangling one hand in Percy’s damp, messy hair, their tongues sliding against each other.

Jason let him take control, let him set the pace and guide him over to the bed. By the time they made it there, Jason had lost his pants and Percy’s towel was somewhere over by the door. Percy turned him around and pushed him down onto the bed gently, his knees propping his lower half up into the air, totally exposed. His face heated with embarrassment at how he must look, but Percy was all over him, kissing every bit of exposed skin he could reach, his hands caressing along after them, smoothing the kisses into his skin.

Then those hands were dipping lower, skating across the leather stretched over his back and down his lower back. Long, deft fingers slipped between his cheeks and rubbed against his hole in firm circles.

Jason’s breath picked up, his heart hammering in his chest as Percy teased him over and over again. He wanted more, but didn’t want to give the satisfaction of asking for it, so he panted softly against the sheets and did his best not to whine.

Percy loomed behind him, one knee resting on the bed. His presence was palpable, and Jason couldn't help but steal a look back at him.

Percy smirked when their eyes met, like he’d been waiting for it.

The fingers left him briefly and then came back cold and slippery. Without hesitation, two of them pressed into him firmly, slipping past his rim and sinking inside him.

Jason’s face heated more and he looked away, a low whine finally escaping him as his hands clenched into the sheets against the delicious burning stretch in his ass. He heard Percy exhale slowly behind him, and his fingers started moving inside him.

He groaned, pushing back with his hips, relaxing as much as he could as Percy scissored his fingers, spinning them, pumping them in and out. He fingered him long past the point of being ready, but he kept going, stroking his walls and pressing down against his prostate on the way in.

His eyelids fluttered closed, legs shaking, cock leaking heavily between his thighs, heat pooling low in his belly.

“Percy, please!” he finally gasped, caving.

Percy chuckled, “Why didn’t you just say so?” as he withdrew his fingers. Then strong hands were gripping his hips and turning him over so he was laying on his back looking up at Percy.

It wasn’t long until something much thicker and more blunt was pressing into him.

“ *Yes,* ” he moaned as Percy slid inside him fully. Percy bottomed out and leaned forwards, grabbing Jason’s wrists and pushing them up above his head on the bed, pinning them to the mattress.

Percy dipped his head to give Jason a long kiss, his hips starting to move, setting a steady pace that slowly picked up until he was fucking him in earnest. Jason’s legs found purchase around Percy’s back, locking together and holding on for dear life.

Percy broke the kiss and leaned back so he could stare down at him while he fucked him. It made Jason squirm under the scrutiny which he thought was probably the reason Percy was doing it, judging by the little smirk that crept across his face.

The hands holding his wrists down changed to just one, the other hiking Jason’s shirt up to his chest before grabbing onto his hip and holding him steady so Percy could fuck into him just the way he liked.

It was torturously good, the pressure on his hip, the little bursts of pleasure zinging up his body whenever he pressed against him just right.

He hadn’t meant to, but his hands started squirming, twisting around against the grip that held them, wanting something to grasp onto. Percy finally released them and Jason wrapped his arms around Percy’s shoulders, burying his face into the sweaty skin of his neck

and holding on tight. The hand around his hip slid down to cup the back of his naked thigh and Percy leaned down a bit further, driving his thrusts deep inside his body.

When his thrusts started becoming more erratic, that hand slipped in between them and circled Jason’s dick, jerking steadily until they came one after the other.

Later, as he watched Percy sleeping soundly, curled against his side, Jason felt contentment, true contentment. He was at peace with this man beside him and the thought alone did funny things to his stomach.

For the first time in his life, Jason felt like he had something he couldn’t lose.

He drifted off to sleep with a soft smile on his face, his hand intertwined with the one resting against his chest.

Chapter End Notes

> Hope I didn't let you down
> Sorry it's been so long. Since the writing group I was in disbanded, I havent had the drive to write as regularly as I used to. Life gets hard sometimes and before I know it, a year has passed by already!
>
> I don't have an estimate on the FrankxLeo epilogue unfortunately, but it is in the works. Don't expect miracles from me, but I do still plan on writing it!

End Notes

Leave a comment if you wish to make me a very happy person, leave a kudos if you wish to make me even happier. Leave both and I might cry. In a good way.

Thank you to my editor NinjaSkyWizard. You're amazing and I appreciate everything you do for me <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!